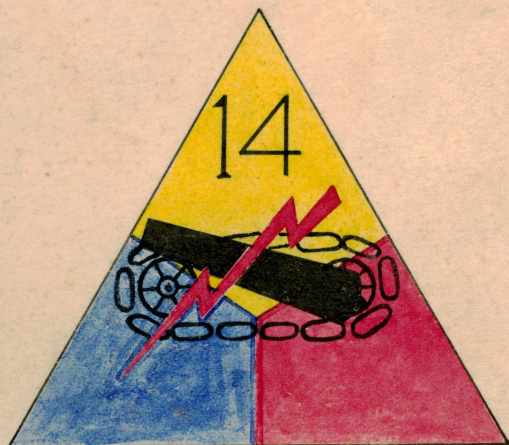


RITTERSHOFFEN

HATTEN



"At Hatten and Rittershoffen, the
14th Armored Division fought one of the
greatest defensive battles of the war."

Jacob L. Devers
general U.S. Army

COLONEL MAURICE K. KURTZ

Unclassified



Hq 14th A.D. arty.
APO 446.

12 July 1945.

Pursuant to verbal authority of C.G. 14th.
Armored Div. This document is down graded
and all portions listed as unclassified.

M. K. Kertz
Col. 7.A.
Div arty commander.

Unclassified

WASSERBURG, GERMANY
12 JULY, 1945

Unclassified

FIELD ARTILLERY SUPPORT

HATTEN - RITTERSHOFFEN

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HEADQUARTERS
14TH ARMORED DIVISION ARTILLERY
APO 446

Unclassified

15 February 1945

SUBJECT: Brochure "Field Artillery in the Battles of Rittershoffen and Hatten."

TO : Commanding General, 14th Armored Division.

1. The enclosed brochure entitled "Field Artillery in the Battles of Rittershoffen and Hatten" has been compiled by Headquarters, 14th Armored Division Artillery, and endeavors to show graphically and in writing, the artillery participation during that very crucial campaign from the 9th to the 20th of January. The brochure includes a short day by day history of the major elements of the VI Corps actually engaged in those battles during the period concerned, and the history is supplemented by (1) a graph showing hourly expenditures of light, medium, and heavy caliber ammunition and the resultant daily totals, (2) sketches of the plans for attack of elements of the 14th Armored Division on 11 and 13 Jan, (3) a "fire-capability" diagram of all the artillery involved, (4) a wire traffic diagram of telephonic communications, (5) an overlay showing fields of observation, and liaison, as established by the 14th Armored Division Artillery, and (6) sketches of areas covered by artillery and the amount of artillery that fell in each area, a by day, b throughout the period.

2. Necessarily, information shown is not complete. However all available sources were used, and to the best knowledge of this Headquarters, all data are accurate. On the sketches, those areas that are shown as having been fired on by friendly artillery are 200 yard concentrations indicating the centers of impact only of numerous targets that were undertaken within the concentration. The fire of tanks, mortars, tank destroyers, and the Cannon Co of the 242nd Infantry is not shown.

3. This Headquarters wishes to acknowledge and express its thanks for the information and data furnished it by the Division Headquarters, Combat Commands, and artillery battalions of the 14th Armored Division, the 79th Division Artillery, the 6th FA Group, 634th FA Bn, 36th FA Bn, 698th FA Bn, 194th FA Bn, and the 72d AAA Gun Bn, all operating under VI Corps Artillery.

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GSD Memo of May 7, 1942
NA Krough on 12/4/49

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26th 4. This document has not only been compiled to portray the very active part artillery played in the battles of Hatten and Rittershoffen, but also to express the Artillery's heartfelt admiration for the splendid work of each and every infantry man and tanker in the face of extraordinarily difficult fighting and some of the enemy's best troops, not the least of which were the 21st Panzer Division, the 8th Panzer Grenadier Division, and the 7th Para Division. It is sincerely hoped that the spirit of cooperation and understanding that exists between all arms of this division may continue and, if possible, increase during the days to come.

For the Commanding Officer:

Carl C. Neely
CARL C. NEELY,
Lt. Col., F.A.,
Executive Officer.

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HATTEN - RITTERSHOFFEN

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TROOP LIST

American Forces engaged in the Hatten-Rittershoffen Battle between the 8th and 20th of January 1945 were as follows:

Air Forces:

12th Tactical Air

42d Infantry Division:

1st Bn, 242d Infantry

2d Bn, 242d Infantry

79th Infantry Division:

313th Infantry Regiment

310th Field Artillery Battalion

311th Field Artillery Battalion

312th Field Artillery Battalion (155mm How)

14th Armored Division:

94th Reconnaissance Squadron

19th Armored Infantry Battalion

62d Armored Infantry Battalion

68th Armored Infantry Battalion

25th Tank Battalion

47th Tank Battalion

48th Tank Battalion

125th Armored Engineer Battalion

499th Armored Field Artillery Battalion

500th Armored Field Artillery Battalion

Hq, Combat Command; A and B and Reserve

Hq, 14th Armored Division Artillery

6th Field Artillery Group:

36th Field Artillery Battalion

194th Field Artillery Battalion

634th Field Artillery Battalion

698th Field Artillery Battalion

17th Field Artillery Group:

977th Field Artillery Battalion + reinforcements on occasions.

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HEADQUARTERS
14TH ARMORED DIVISION ARTILLERY
APO 446

15 February 1945

FIELD ARTILLERY IN THE BATTLES OF
RITTERSHOFFEN AND HATTEN

TERRAIN:

Early January 1945 found the 79th Infantry Division, reinforced by elements of the 42nd Infantry Division, holding defensive positions generally along the old Maginot line from Birlenbach (R1041), Munspach, Oberroedern, Hatten, Forstfeld (R2128), then generally along a line to the SW on the W bank of the Rhine River. The Division sector on the northern portion of the front contained bare, rolling hills. Defensive positions were sited behind rivers and had excellent fields of fire. The sector of the front between Hatten and Forstfeld ran thru the Haguenau Forest in very flat, heavily wooded country. Little or no observation was possible in the forest areas. SW of Forstfeld, the line ran thru low, level country, intersperced with small patches of timber. All defenses E of the Haguenau Forest were dominated by observation from the high ground E of the Rhine River. The road nets in the Division sector converged in general at three places; Soultz (R1037), Haguenau (R0324), and Bischwiller (R0918). The Haguenau Forest afforded few means of communication between the troops on its SE side and those on its N. The towns of Hatten and Rittershoffen lay on the S slope of a ridge between the N edge of the Haguenau forest and the Seltzbach River. The Haguenau Forest proper, extends to the

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OSD Memo of May 3, 1972
PA Keough ON 12/4/89

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N to the Seltzbach River, and approximately 2000 yds E of Hatten. The bare, open slopes on the N of Hatten and S of the Sletzbach River afford no concealment from hostile observation in Stundwiller (R1836), and Buhl (R1935). A stream flowing E from Rittershoffen, thru Hatten, and thence E into the Haguenau Forest, formed a valley defiladed from all observation N and W of Rittershoffen. This stream played an important part in the battles of Hatten and Rittershoffen in that it afforded a concealed route for movement of enemy troops. The high ground in the vicinity of Hohwiller (R1236), dominated all avenues of approach to the N or W from Soultz, and was the critical tactical terrain feature in the immediate area. In order to make a detailed study of the artillery action in the vicinity of Hatten and Rittershoffen, a 4000 meter square with the lower left coordinates 1532, and the upper right coordinates 1936 was selected.

Weather:

The weather during the period Jan 9 - 20 Incl, was typical Aleation winter weather, marked with snow, below-freezing weather, high winds, and fog. During the period Jan 9--20, operations were frequently hampered by an almost complete lack of visibility. Snow on the roads made movement of armored equipment extremely difficult. Cross-country operations were, however, practicable, and over nearly the entire battlefield, the ground was frozen to such a depth that tanks could operate without danger of being stuck.

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Maginot Line Fortifications:

Large concrete pillboxes located just to the E, N, and NE of Hatten, were designed to be invulnerable to artillery fire,

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containing heavy concrete and earth protection for numerous galleries. Smaller Maginot Line fortifications existed at the southern exit of Hatten, at the E end of a RR cut about 500 yds E from the S entrance to Hatten, and at a RJ approx. 1200 yds SE of Hatten. These fortifications were the typical small machine gun and AT gun emplacements. These fortifications were overrun by the Germans during the course of the battle and were used as shelters for personnel, material, and AT gun locations. They proved very difficult to neutralize. The larger fortifications remained in use even though repeatedly attacked by ^{our} 8" and 240mm hows.

Events Prior to 9 January 1945:

In early January 1945, it became known that the 21st Panzer Division had moved to the vicinity of Wissembourg. Elements of this Division had probed the front of the 79th Infantry Division and had made a small scale attack on the front of the 313th Infantry NW of Oberreudern (R1636), on the 6th of January. CC"A" of the 14th Armored Division, consisting of the 48th Tank Bn, the 68th AIB, 500th AFA Bn, plus attachments of Reconnaissance (C Troop 94th), Engineers, Signal, and Medical Troops, was moved to the vicinity of Surbourg (R0834), where it was attached to Task Force Wahl of the 79th Infantry Division. It was given the mission of repulsing any German armored attacks from the N, with special attention to attacks on the direction Wissembourg, Ingolsheim, and Soultz. The 48th Tank Bn placed one medium Co in the vicinity of Soultz attached to 68th AIB, and held the remainder of the Bn in Surbourg. The 500th AFA Bn occupied positions

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in the vicinity of Reimerswillery (R108349), and was given the mission of reinforcing the fires of the 79th Division Artillery and of being prepared to support CC"A" if committed.

The 242nd Infantry, a part of the 42nd Division, held the portion of the line S of Seltzbach River and E of Hatten. This unit was lightly reinforced by TD's and held the front ^(colored) on the key terrain N of the Haguenau Forest. The probing attacks continued from day today by the Germans, had developed a weakness in this sector which covered the most direct, and least-defensible route to the high ground in the vicinity of Hohwiller. The 21st Panzer Division launched a heavy armored attack against the 3rd Bn of the 313th Infantry in the Aschbach-Standwiller^U area, just N of the Sletzbach River. A sizeable penetration was made in the front of the 313th Infantry. The line was restored to its original positions by a C/A which inflicted heavy losses on the enemy. This attack revealed the location of the enemy's armor and the dispositions of CC"A" were altered to meet the threat which might develop from E. Four companies of the 48th Tank Bn were moved to positions on the high ground vicinity of Leiterswiller, and the 500th AFA Bn made the necessary changes in fields of fire to support any attack to the E or NE.

During the night of 8 January 1945, the 25th Panzer Grenadier Division made its initial appearance by launching a sudden, violent attack from the woods E of Hatten against the sector of the 1st Bn of the 242nd Infantry. The major, portion of the front line elements of this Bn were surrounded, and armored reconnaissance units were pushed W towards Hatten.

9 January 1945:

On the morning of 9 January 1945, the 2nd Bn of the

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242nd Infantry was ordered into Hatten with a mission of

restoring the MLR. During the night of 8 - 9 January 1945, enemy forces were active and infiltrated into and around the town of Hatten. At 1100, A-48 moved into an assembly position just W of Rittershoffen. At 1215, A-48 received orders to return to Kuhlendorf, arriving there about 1245. At 1330, A-48 received orders to move immediately to Rittershoffen to repel a German tank attack sweeping towards Rittershoffen from Hatten, N of the RR. The remainder of the 48th Tank Bn moved to an assembly area in Niederbetschdorf. The Bn closed in its assembly area at approximately 1500. A-48 arrived in Rittershoffen just in time to place a platoon E of Rittershoffen, S of the Rittershoffen-Hatten Rd, one platoon N of the Rd and one platoon S and W of Rittershoffen. The platoon (1-A-48), S and E of Rittershoffen allowed the German tanks to come within 600 yds S of their position where they and the assault gun platoon of E-94 opened fire, knocking out in a half-hour period 8 German tanks, and 1 self-propelled gun. The Germans had also attempted to attack Rittershoffen from the N from Hatten, but upon destruction of the attack on the S, turned around and fled to the E of Hatten. This action was completed by 1630. At 1800, A-48 attacked to restore the old MLR, one platoon on the S and one on the N, in conjunction with an attack launched by a Bn of the 242nd Infantry. C-48 remained in a position E of Rittershoffen to support A-48. The tanks reached positions by 1840 on both N and S of Hatten that covered all routes of approach into Hatten. The Bn of the 242nd Infantry moved into Hatten only 300 yds. A-48 was relieved by two platoons of the 827th TD Bn at 0200 10 January 1945, "G" and "F" Companies, 2nd Bn 315th Infantry,

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moved into Hatten around 0100 10 January 1945 in the western 200 yds of town.

The day's artillery activity reveals that the bulk of the fire was placed on routes of approach from SE towards Hatten, on enemy troops and on hostile positions in the center of Hatten. The 2nd Bn 242nd Infantry failed to clear the town and was badly mauled during the days action. At night, friendly Infantry held the SW portion of Hatten, and two platoons of "A" Co 48th Tk Bn outposted the NE and SE edges of Hatten.

10 January 1945:

The 10th of January 1945 saw the arrival in the Rittershoffen area of 3rd Bn 315th Infantry. At 0900, A-48 and F-315 started to attack S around Hatten to restore the MLR, but a German tank and Infantry attack that jumped off at 0900 around the N end of Hatten forced A-48 back to the E of Rittershoffen and F-315 back into their old positions in Hatten. This attack was repulsed definitely by 1200. A second attack was planned in which the 48th Tk Bn, operating with the 2nd Bn of 315th Infantry was to attack, clear Hatten, and restore the MLR. In this operation, "B" Co of the 48th Tk Bn was to attack towards Hatten from the S, generally along the RR, then N on the E edge of Hatten. "C" Co to attack NE, S of the Seltzbach River, while "A" Co, with the Bn reserve, remained in the vicinity of Rittershoffen.

During the night, German forces had infiltrated reinforcements into the Hatten area and had succeeded in emplacing AT guns and heavy tanks in concealed positions in and around Hatten. Initially, the attack was a success and

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the 2nd Bn 315th Infantry went into the western portion of Hatten. "C" Co of the 48th suffered heavily from AT fire coming from guns emplaced in buildings or near buildings in Hatten, and at 1800 in the afternoon, was ordered to withdraw. The relief of elements of the 242nd Infantry remaining in Hatten was ordered for the night of the 10th and 11th. At dark, the tank Bn reorganized on the high ground NW of Rittershoffen.

The two platoons of tanks which had been outposting the NE portion of Hatten on the night of 9 - 10 was relieved by 8 TD's manned by colored troops, and the two platoons were withdrawn at about 0300 to Rittershoffen. During the morning, at 0850, the CO of the North TD platoon was killed and the TD's withdrew their outposts into the town, joining elements of the 315th Infantry, where they were employed as armored pillboxes throughout the remainder of the action. After the withdrawal of "B" and "C" of the 48th from the attack on Hatten, C-48 was left E of Rittershoffen with 3rd Bn 315th to defend Rittershoffen.

On this date, Rittershoffen was lightly defended by elements of the 315th Infantry, the bulk of the defending troops being in the town. During the night of 10 - 11 January, German forces infiltrating by covered routes, using the northern street of Hatten and draw leading W into Rittershoffen, succeeded in occupying the northern and eastern portions of Rittershoffen, getting in rear of "C" Co 48th Tank Bn, outposting the E approaches to Rittershoffen.

The artillery action on this date as well as on the 9th was directed largely towards hostile routes of approach, and

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troop concentrations. The action during the day was largely of a piece-meal nature, and was not well coordinated with the artillery effort.

11 January 1945:

At approximately 0630, "C" Co of the 48th Tank Bn, on outpost, was attacked by a Co of German tanks and what was estimated to be about 300 Infantry, supported by heavy artillery concentrations. This attack succeeded in driving the Infantry and tanks to the western side of Rittershoffen. By 0730, "C" Co 48th Tank Bn lost 12 med tanks.

Early morning of the 11th found the 3rd Bn 315th Inf pinned down in the SW portion of Rittershoffen, the 2nd Bn of the 315th Infantry with some survivors of the 242nd occupying the western portion of Hatten. The enemy had succeeded in reinforcing his troops and bringing into the area a considerable number of AT guns which were skillfully emplaced during the night.

It was decided to commit CC"A" as a unit in an attack to start at 1545 with a mission as follows: "68th AIB (-), plus "A" Co 48th Tank Bn, will attack E from R150334, and capture the NE end of Rittershoffen, push E and capture the N side of Hatten, then occupy the MLR E of Hatten. The 48th Tank Bn (-), plus a Co of 68th AIB, will attack to E, capture S end of town of Rittershoffen, and push on to E, South of the Rittershoffen-Hatten Rd, assist the 68th and 315th Inf in the capture of Hatten, and occupy MLR. Time of attack on Hatten to be coordinated with 315th Inf."

The 68th Inf (reinforced), attacked at 1545, and encountered very heavy artillery, mortar, and S/A fire and

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by darkness had reached a line approximately 500 yds NW of Rittershoffen, where they dug in for the night.

At 1615, the 48th launched a tank attack which made little progress in the face of strong enemy AT fire coming from the woods and the cemetery in the SE part of Rittershoffen.

At 1100, Division Artillery Commander, 14th Armored Division, was given instructions by VI Corps Artillery Officer to move the 499th and 501st AFA to the vicinity of Soultz (R0938), with a mission of reinforcing the fires of the 79th Infantry Division and to support C/A's by the 14th Armored Division either to the N or E. Early in the afternoon, the Division Artillery CP was established in Kutzenhausen (R0337), and the 499th AFA Bn in Soultz. The projected move for the 501st AFA Bn was cancelled, and this Bn was attached to the 45th Infantry Division where it was urgently needed to support action in the vicinity of Reipertswiller (Q8037). This attachment became effective at 1400. The 499th AFA Bn completed displacement from the Niederbronn Les Bains area (Q9339), to positions just S and W of Soultz, closing in the new area at 2200. Mission of 499th was "reinforcing fires of 312th FA Bn." The remainder of the 14th Armored Division moved on the afternoon and the night of the 11th to assembly area in the Soultz-Surbourg area.

12 January 1945:

By 0630, GC"B" of the 14th Armored Division, consisting of 25th Tank Bn, 62nd AIB, plus attachments of Engineers and Signal troops, was moving to attack positions in vicinity of

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Hohwiller (R1237), with mission of attacking on order in column of Bns. The leading Bn was to seize Hatten; the second Bn to cut the Rd E of Hatten and restore the MLR, remaining thereon until relieved by elements of the 79th Division. At the same time, CC"R" of the 14th Armored Division, consisting of 47th Tank Bn (-B Co), the 19th AIB, 94th Ren Sq (-Co A & C), was moving to assembly area in vicinity of Hoelschloch (R0635), with mission of reinforcing CC"B", or of attacking on short notice.

14th Armored Division Artillery assumed control of the 499th and 500th AFA Bns and completed its wire communication system to support any projected attack. During the day, the 68th AIB, and the 3rd Bn 315th Infantry succeeded in clearing the SW part of Rittershoffen. The fighting was bitter, involving house to house fighting under intense artillery and S/A fire. Tank attacks to clear the SE edge of town were ineffective.

CC"B", attacking at 1130 advanced elements of 25th Tank Bn and 62nd Infantry across the open ground S of the Seltsbach River to a position generally N of the W edge of Hatten. They were, however, unable to occupy the ridge N of town, and after the loss of 5 tanks, withdrew to their original L/D, on the Rittershoffen-Leiterswiller Rd. The enemy, well dug in, supplied with numerous weapons, and supported by what was estimated to be approximately 1500 yds of artillery fire. succeeded in maintaining his position along the ridge N of HATTEN.

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At 2200, the Commanding General, 14th Armored Division, issued orders for a coordinated attack for the 13th of January. In substance, this order was as follows:

"a. CC"A" to continue the attack at daylight 13 Jan 45, clear Rittershoffen, after clearing town, assist CC"R", reestablish VI Corps MLR, hold MLR until relieved by 79th Division.

b. CC"B" attack the N edge of Rittershoffen and Hatten by fire, using all available tank and assault guns. Attack at daylight, coordinating fires with movements of CC"A" and CC"R"; protect Division left, North, flank.

c. CC"R" assemble in vicinity Niederbetchdorf (RL333), prior to daylight. Under cover of friendly smoke screen, seize Hatten, reestablish Corps MLR, hold MLR until relieved by 79th Division; protect right, South, flank of the Division.

d. 94th Rcn Sq less detachments, establish Rcn screen along the general line Soultz-Hoffen (RL536)

e. Division Artillery general support."

At this stage in the operation in the vicinity of Hatten, a peculiar intermingling of troops existed, elements of 242nd Infantry, 315th Infantry, tanks and TD's were in town. Elements of the 242nd Inf and 315th Inf were being supported by FA belonging to the 79th Division. The 14th Armored Division was being committed as a unit. Artillery support being provided by the 500th and 499th AFA Bns. Corps artillery support was being provided by the 6th FA Group and

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the 17th FA Group. Fires in certain areas, especially those along the front of the 315th Infantry in Rittershoffen were to be cleared through the 79th Division Artillery. Fires in front of elements of the 14th Armored Division were to be cleared through 14th Armored Division. This intermingling of troops called for the utmost cooperation and closest type of coordination in preparing fire plans.

Hostile observation in Aschbach, Buhl, and Stundwiller, and Hill 160 (R179342), dominated the battlefield.

The fire plan for the days attack involved the use of 8" hows in the close support of troops engaged in Hatten. A preparation fire of 30 min was to be fired by med and heavy artillery on known hostile positions in the vicinity of Niederbronn, Trimbach, Niederseebach, Oberseebach, Gleeburg, and Ingolsheim. Interdiction fire was arranged for on Salmbach, a town on the enemy's main supply route. "H" hour was set at 0800 13 Jan.

The night was foggy and cold, the roads covered with ice, and movements to the attack positions were accomplished under most difficult circumstances.

13 January 1945:

Early morning of the 13th revealed a heavy ground haze. FO's were unable to see targets and visibility up until noon varied from 100 to 200 yards. Due to this atmospheric condition, "H" hour was changed from 0800 to 1015 for GCA and 1130 for CC"B".

The attack by CC"A" jumped off at 1015 under cover of intense friendly artillery fire placed on the SE portion of

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Rittershoffen. The 3rd Bn of the 315th and 48th Tank Bn were able to completely occupy several more houses in the S part of town just E of the church in Rittershoffen. The 48th Tank Bn moved 7 medium tanks and 5 light tanks into a position N of the RR and between Rittershoffen-Hatten Rd E of Rittershoffen. CCR attacked at 0800A across the open ground between the Haguenau Forest and Rittershoffen under the cover of friendly smoke screen, and by mid-day, reestablished contact with elements of 242nd and 315th Infantry which were cut off in Hatten. The tank attack generally along the RR towards Hatten was able to reach the south part of town about 1100. The 19th Infantry failed to reach town, however, the attack was reorganized in the afternoon and in an advance directly into the W part of town, the 47th Tank Bn carried the 19th AIB into town by dark while a second assault was made on the South. Heavy artillery concentrations along the SE portion of Hatten effectively silenced hostile weapons and made it possible for tanks to enter the main N-S street from the S. Shell craters in the road however, made the road impassable, and after the loss of 2 tanks from bazooka fire, the tank attack was diverted to the W about 200 yds where a trail entered the town and the tanks moved into the town by dark. This attack cleared the enemy from the northern sector of Hatten, and left the enemy in control only of the NE portion of the town.

Although CC"B" had been directed to attack by fire only,

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the lack of progress of the forces attacking in Rittershoffen caused elements of GCB to be committed in an attack on Hatten from the N. Three separate attempts were made to reach Hatten, the deepest penetration being made in the vicinity of RL83347. Elements of GCB were forced to withdraw in each case by heavy AT gun fire, and intense S/A, artillery, and mortar fire.

At 1340, enemy reinforcements were found ^{in observer's} moving towards Hatten on the Buhl-Hatten Rd. The 312th FA Bn (med) took the bridge at RL89349 under fire, but was unable to destroy the bridge due to poor visibility. During the day, the Air Force took advantage of clearing weather conditions and made an attempt to drop supplies to the 315th Infantry surrounded in Hatten.

At 1550, the 499th AFA Bn marked the location of the town of Buhl, using red smoke in order to guide dive bombers in a strafing mission on the town.

At 2115, enemy troops launched a very powerful C/A, using armor, flame throwers carried on tanks, and Infantry. This attack forced our tanks to withdraw from their positions on the Rittershoffen-Hatten road and regained the E edge of Hatten, and approximately half of the N edge of Hatten.

At 2325, the enemy made a second C/A on Rittershoffen, using similar equipment. This attack was effectively broken up by artillery fire, but our Infantry were driven from town before the attack was stopped.

14 January 1945:

The early morning hours of the 14th of January were

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characterized by lack of hostile activity. Clearing air conditions brought an increase in the number of observed missions. At approximately 1400, a very heavy enemy attack launched from the N and E portions of Rittershoffen was stopped by artillery fire, and the fighting in Rittershoffen reverted to the use of demolition agencies, flame throwers, and bazookas, in an effort to win a house at a time from the enemy. Air observers had one of their best days during the operations. One observer discovered and destroyed a gun position which was camouflaged to represent a manure pile. 8" hows were adjusted on a large Maginot Line pillbox at 18003365, and after 15 rds succeeded in destroying it. Numerous enemy targets consisting of small groups of Infantry were fired upon during the day.

At 2300, an attempt by the enemy to attack ⁱⁿ Hatten from the E was broken up by artillery fire.

At 2330, a very determined attack on the N portion of Hatten was likewise stopped by artillery fire. However, enemy succeeded in gaining control of the buildings on the N side of the N Rd in Hatten, forcing our troops to withdraw from that portion of the town. The fighting on this date, in both Hatten and Rittershoffen was at very close quarters, and on numerous occasions, heavy defensive artillery fires were placed on enemy troops in buildings just across the street from our own troops. It will be noted from the sketch showing the concentration of fires on the 14th of January, that the preponderance of the fires delivered fell within the N and E edge of both Rittershoffen and Hatten.

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Our troops were unable to dislodge the enemy from the churches in Rittershoffen and Hatten, and the enemy made good use of the observation obtained from these positions to bring effective fire on our troops.

At 1215, the 6th FA Group ordered an M12 (155mm Sp Gun) to report to the CP of CCR. This gun was picked up later in the afternoon by an observer of the 310th FA and moved into Rittershoffen where it succeeded in firing 3 rds at very short range into the church. Hostile fire from heavy weapons and AT guns forced the withdrawal of this piece after the 3rd rd and no material damage was done. Failure to make the necessary arrangements for close supporting and covering fires resulted in the failure to accomplish the mission. Friendly troops ^(#79 Div) occupying buildings within 50 yds of this church refused to clear fires of heavy weapons such as 8" hows on the church and felt that to withdraw far enough to permit fire of heavy weapons on the church would merely result in the loss of that much ground. Stone structures such as this proved to be unprofitable targets for 105mm how fire. Darkness found a considerable portion of both Rittershoffen and Hatten on fire. Air observers reported Buhl burning at dark as a result of bombing. After dark, 32 rds of 105mm WP were fired into the SE portion of Hatten in an attempt to burn that portion of town and prevent enemy occupation of buildings not on fire.

15 January 1945:

At 0040, a small C/A on Hatten, support ed by 5 tanks was

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broken up by fire from medium artillery. At 0600, another C/A in Hatten supported by flame throwers and tanks carrying flame throwers, starting in the eastern edge of Hatten, was broken up by artillery fire.

At 1135, a small attack launched from the northern part of Hatten towards the buildings in the southern part of town was broken up by artillery fire. At 1430, the Liaison Officer with CCR requested supporting fires for an attack to be launched at 1500. These fires were worked out and the 15 min preparation was fired between 1500 and 1515. Units of artillery of the 14th Armored Division and 6th FA Group participating. This attack was made in an effort to regain ground lost during the previous day. This attack, however, failed in its purpose, as just as it was initiated, a strong German attack estimated at Bn strength was launched from the E of Hatten. The preparation fires scheduled to follow were continued as defensive fires, and no material change in positions resulted. By 1640, these fires were lifted. At 1720, enemy pressure in Hatten was again increased and buildings were being burned. Friendly med tanks moved into the town where they joined elements of CCR and a new attempt was made to advance to the E in Hatten as far as the 18 grid line. Again, just as this attack was launched, a hostile C/A was launched from the NE. This C/A was broken up by artillery fire and no material change in troop dispositions followed.

At 1800, the artillery was advaised that the ammunition

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situation was critical and that drastic reductions must be made in ammunition expenditures, that every effort should be made to hold expenditures below 30 rds per gun per day for 105mm and 180 rds per day per Bn for 155 how.

4289 { 8" how.
240 how.
mk.

The evening, after dark, remained relatively quiet, the atmosphere cleared, and observers took advantage of bright moonlight and snow-covered ground to fire observed missions at small hostile groups found moving in the open during the night.

{ light enough
to read paper
out of doors
all night.

The first jet-propelled German plane seen in this area dropped a bomb approximately 100 yds NE of "B" Btry, 499th position with no damage resulting.

16 January 1945:

At 0115, in the morning, a request was made for an artillery observer to accompany a patrol to penetrate the hostile lines immediately N of Rittershoffen and establish an OP in an abandoned tunnel. An NCO observer was supplied and remained with the patrol and observed hostile activities in the northern edge of Rittershoffen until 0440, when the patrol returned. Based on the report of this observer, it was decided an attempt would be made to establish a permanent OP in the same location the next night. This point afforded observation across one of the main routes of approach from the E into Rittershoffen, and was considered essential from an artillery point of view. This patrol also reported that the enemy had received a number of tanks as reinforcements in Rittershoffen during the night. At 0910 in the morning,

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troops of CCA made request for an 8" how to be ready to fire on the church in Rittershoffen and demolish it between 1200 and 1300. Arrangements were made to fulfill this request but the troops in the immediate vicinity^(79 div) of the church refused to permit this fire, so this mission was not accomplished.

Intermittently during the morning, enemy mortars fired smoke concentrations in the central part of Hatten, evidently in attempt to screen some movement. Air OP's attempting to find out what was going on behind the smoke screen were unable to determine what the nature of the enemy activity was because of very poor observing conditions.

At 1142, the church steeple in Hatten was observed to fall, believed to have been the result of continued artillery fire in that vicinity.

At 1231, a small C/A starting in the N part of Hatten was broken up by artillery fire.

At 1245, a second request was made for defensive fires in the northern portions of Hatten.

At 1415, a platoon of tanks and a platoon of Infantry were ordered to attack at 1500 to the SE and take the woods on the N end of Rittershoffen. The artillery support for this attack was worked out.

At 1445, a request was received from the Air Force to mark Trimbach with 2 rds of smoke for a bombing mission. This was fired by 634th FA Bn.

At 1900, the attack to seize the woods in the N end of Rittershoffen was abandoned with no ground having been gained.

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In general, the days activity was that of bitter house to house fighting accompanied by heavy concentrations of arty fire on close-in targets. A few observed missions were fired during the day against small groups of enemy troops and vehicles.

At 2320, heavy vehicular traffic was noted in the area N of Hatten. This appeared to confirm a PW report that a relief of troops in Hatten was taking place. Heavy harrassing fire program was initiated and maintained throughout the night.

17 January 1945:

Heavy vehicular traffic on the roads N of Hatten and on the northern Rd in Hatten continued in spite of harrassing fires. Several TOT's were organized and fired, apparently with good effect, as a marked decrease in vehicular traffic was noted.

At 0841, hostile tanks and Infantry were discovered moving from the NE into Hatten which was being heavily shelled by German artillery. At 0855, in the morning, a very heavy hostile C/A was launched against the troops in the SW portion of Hatten. Artillery observers in Hatten were forced to abandon their radios and take cover in cellars for protection. At 0914, the C/A from the NE was reinforced by an attack supported by Infantry and tanks which emerged from the woods E of Hatten. All available artillery was brought into action and by 1000 the C/A was effectively broken up.

At 1120, in the morning, friendly tanks under a covering

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screen of time fire attempted to move E along the RR and then to the NE into Hatten. This attack made good progress initially, but was broken up by hostile AT fire coming from SE of Hatten.

(Task force Wahl)

"A" Co from the 1st Bn 315th Infantry launched an attack early in the morning against the N edge of Rittershoffen. This attack was not supported initially by artillery fire and the Co was not heard from until 1215 when it reported it was able to get most of its troops into the town. Two survivors of this Co were found later in the day, the rest of the Co disappeared.

At 1230, CCR reported that the tanks attacking in the vicinity of RR S of Hatten had outrun Infantry support and it was hoped that they could continue on to the E, then N, and cut the East-West Rd to Buhl. This attack apparently gaining some success, was being supported by the tanks and Infantry in Hatten in a coordinated effort to clear out the W portion of the town and regain ground lost in the last 2 days. It was closely supported by observed fire, and it has been estimated that at least 200 enemy were killed, and about 100 yds of the town were regained. This attack was stopped after the loss of 3 tanks at about 1410. Our troops were then in possession of an area approximately 100 yds N and S and 400 yds E and W in the SW portion of Hatten.

In an attempt to relieve the situation in Rittershoffen, a coordinated attack was organized for 1400. This consisted of an attack from the NW by one Co against the main North-

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South street in Rittershoffen, an attack towards the church in the East Central part of Rittershoffen, and an attack to the NE from the SW portion of Rittershoffen. This attack jumped off on time and was closely supported by mortars, artillery, and flame throwers. Intense enemy artillery fire and S/A fire broke up this attack with no appreciable gain for our troops.

Throughout the remainder of the day, the situation remained tense. The slightest movement on either side calling for heavy artillery concentrations. Tank action throughout the day resulted in heavy casualties on both sides. Nearly all the action on this date took place at very short range under most difficult conditions of observation. The weather was such that Liaison Planes could not fly. Ground observers could see only short distances, and due to the movement of the troops on each side, it was frequently very difficult to distinguish friend and foe. Darkness on the 17th found the troops in Hatten in approximately the same position that they had been in the early morning. Ground lost in the morning C/A's was regained at the cost of numerous casualties. These troops were tired and considerably shaken by the tremendous volume of artillery fire that had been placed in the town by our own as well as the enemy's artillery. No material change had been made in the situation nor dispositions of the troops in Rittershoffen. The troops on both sides welcomed a rest and the night was marked by almost a complete lack of any activity other than harrassing

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artillery fires.

18 January 1945:

Everything remaining quiet until about 0835 in the morning when a group of enemy tanks were located at R167346. These tanks were fired upon by med artillery and several hits were obtained. During the morning, visibility improved considerably, and ground observers were able to adjust heavy artillery on enemy occupied pillboxes at R174347 and R186347. Three direct hits with 240mm how on the latter pillbox caused smoke to come from the pillbox, but the fog closed in before the extent of the damage could be finally ascertained. In the middle of the afternoon, numerous small but profitable targets were picked up by ground observers and were fired upon with profit and good effect. About 1550, about 12 tanks were found at R15953406 in the northern part of Rittershoffen. Fire of the 6th FA Group was adjusted on them using an AOP. It was believed that 6 of these tanks were destroyed or heavily damaged. The remainder took cover in nearby buildings and woods, and were lost to view.

At 1712, 14th Division Artillery AOP reported what appeared to be flashes from rocket guns coming from vicinity R218348 and requested artillery fire. As the first volley was fired on this mission, 6 rockets landed immediately in rear of "A" Btry position of the 499th AFA Bn. Other reports of rockets falling in the area confirmed the fact there was apparently a Btry of Nebelweffers in action. Six Btry volleys were fired at the location where the flashes were seen, and no more rocket fire was received for two days. The

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artillery fire apparently hit an ammunition dump in the rocket position area as a very large, brilliant fire was started which burned for approximately 5 minutes.

At about 1915, hostile tanks were heard moving in the northern portion of Hatten. These tanks were apparently moving into positions in the open from which buildings in the S part of Hatten could be engaged by direct fire, as they commenced firing into the buildings occupied by our troops at about 2000 and in spite of artillery fire delivered at suspected locations, these tanks continued to harass and annoy our troops throughout the night. At 2035, the Germans pushed in an attack supported by Infantry and tanks from the E and NE against our position in Hatten. This attack was promptly smothered by artillery fire and by 2045, the situation was reported as quiet. At 2120, a message was received from the CO, CCR, Col. Huddelson, which was essentially as follows: "Request you inform all artillery participating that your fire on the last C/A in Hatten was the best demonstration of concentrated fire power that our troops have seen to date. Believe it saved the day."

The defensive fires mentioned were asked for and fell within 50 yds of friendly troops and are known to have inflicted very heavy enemy casualties. At the time this fire was delivered, practically all of the friendly troops had been driven to cover in basements as results of the direct fire coming from the tanks mentioned above. The remainder of the night remained quiet except for the usual harassing missions.

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19 January 1945:

At 0020, observers from CCB, 14th Armored Division, reported increased activity in the NW portion of Rittershoffen and reported hearing the movement of heavy equipment. They also reported that since the med artillery fire against the tanks in the northern part of town the afternoon before, "popping noises" had been heard almost continuously, and they believed an ammunition dump had been hit. It is possible that the sound of movement of heavy equipment noted at this time was an attempt to evacuate tanks disabled the afternoon before. *(confirmed later as true (acts))* The night remained generally quiet, and little activity was noted until 0755 when the enemy laid down a heavy barrage on the SW portion of Hatten and delivered a heavy attack from the N, NE, and E. All available artillery was brought into action on the N and E portions of Hatten. At 0922, CCR reported hostile fire had slackened materially, but that the situation was still tense, the enemy having gained some ground on the E. Bulk of fire was then shifted on the S and E portion of the town. At 0931, observers with CCR in Hatten requested that the fire be moved in closer to our troops on the E and reported that 3 enemy tanks on the ridge at approximately RL75342 were firing by direct laying into Hatten. By 0940, the hostile attack was definitely broken. At 1227, an artillery FO with troops in Hatten sent the following message: "Need fire badly at RL76337, tanks and Infantry. Our troops burning S.O.I.'s". A new attack from the E had pushed our troops out of 5 or 6 houses in Hatten. At 1308, another call was received for

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additional fire in the clearing between the two streets in the W part of Hatten. Prompt delivery of this fire caught enemy troops in the open and caused heavy casualties. Enemy pressure continued heavy until about 1400 when the attacks appeared to be completely broken. Clearing weather in the afternoon permitted several profitable observed missions on hostile infantry, but air observers were not able to operate due to high winds.

At 1610, an air support mission was fired thru one of the med artillery Bn which marked Niederroedern with smoke and the town was successfully dive-bombed by our Air Force, the mission being completed at 1620. The surprise nature of the request for this fire mission prevented the laying down of AA artillery neutralization fires. The bombers *(usually arranged ahead as it counter battery)* received such heavy AA fire that they were unable to strafe the town after bombing it.

At 1725, the 499th reported that they had completed firing 30 rds of 8" how shells on the Hatten-Buhl bridge, and believed that they had so damaged the approaches that the bridge was unuseable. *(later proved incorrect - close hits ineffective)* Around 2000, an unusual amount of traffic was heard moving on the Buhl-Hatten Rd. Some of this traffic appeared to be stopping in the vicinity of Maginot Line pillboxes near this Rd, and some appeared to be going into Hatten. This traffic continued until approximately 2400 in spite of numerous TOT's which were fired at critical points along this road.

20 January 1945:

The early morning hours of the 20th were marked by

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~~extremely active and hold enemy patrolling throughout the~~
Hatten area. At 0235 in the morning, "B" Btry of the 977th
FA was ordered to move to locations in another area. At 0730,
it began to snow and visibility was reduced nearly to 100 yds.
At 1030, the snow had stopped and visibility had improved and
the remainder of the morning was consumed in firing
observed missions on known enemy strongpoints, pillboxes,
and small groups of enemy observed moving on foot on the
Buhl-Hatten Rd. At 1400, a heavy smoke screen was built up
about 200 yds E of Hatten apparently to cover some movement
being made by hostile troops. Artillery fire was placed on
and behind this screen and heavy retaliatory fires were
received from the Germans. Snow started again in the after-
noon and prevented any effective observation of artillery
fire and the activity decreased rapidly during the afternoon.
The day was marked as the first one in 12 days where the
Germans failed to put on a sizeable attack. Our troops
welcomed the opportunity to rest and improve their positions.
The 20th of January will be remembered by all troops engaged
in the Rittershoffen Hatten Battle, not only because the
enemy failed to attack and they were allowed to rest, but
by the rapidity with which they executed a withdrawal from
very close contact with the enemy without his apparently
discovering their departure.

The Division Artillery Commander, 14th Armored Division,
at 1300, was advised that the VI Corps was moving at once
to a new defensive line S of the Haguenau Forest and generally

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along the Moder River, that the 14th Armored Division, less the artillery, would assemble in the vicinity of Dettwiller, Q8017, that he would report at once to Corps Artillery Headquarters for orders concerning movement and new positions for the artillery, and that the mission of the 14th Armored Division Artillery would be that of general support of the 79th and 103rd Infantry Divisions. CCA of the 14th Armored Division was to remain in position and cover the withdrawal of the 79th Division.

Since this withdrawal was to be completed by 0720 on the 21st of January, the Division Artillery Commander returned to his CP and directed that the various Bn Commanders with the necessary parties meet him at Corps Artillery Headquarters for orders at once. At about 1530, instructions were given to Division Artillery Executive to start infiltrating his Headquarters to Minversheim, Q916206, immediately and to move the ACP landing field to its former position near Hattmatt, Q770215. A noteworthy event which occurred on the afternoon of the 20th was the movement of the ACP's planes from their landing field in the vicinity of Hegeney, (R0032) to Hattmatt (Q770215) in a very heavy snow storm, with visibility at times less than 100 yds.

The 500th AFA was attached to CCA for use in covering the movement, and permission was obtained to move the 499th AFA Bn to the vicinity of Ohlungen (Q9728) without delay. The necessary route clearances having been obtained through the Haguenau Forest, this Bn initiated its movement at 1725 and closed in its new position at 0245 on the 21st. The 500th AFA, after supporting the withdrawal of CCA, closed in its

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new position area in the vicinity of Uhrwiller, (Q9529)
 at 1315 on the 21st. These movements were made on roads
 cluttered with traffic, covered with ice, and heavy snow.
 No equipment or ammunition was abandoned or lost during
 this displacement.

2/15/45 — Minversheim
 France —

5 copies - 1 - VI corps arty
 1 - C. S. 14 A.D.
 1 - G-3 - 14 A.D.

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 1 - C. S. 14 A.D. arty
 1 - Diary - 14 A.D. arty.

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In an effort to help restore the VI Corps' main line of resistance, the 14th Armored Division commanded by Brigadier General A. C. Smith, made plans to seize Hatten and Rittershoffen.*

The quality of the German troops encountered in Hatten and Rittershoffen revealed that the enemy was throwing the best it had into those two villages in a determined effort to make its campaign a success.

The enemy had a great deal to gain if it could relieve American pressure from the Colmar Pocket and also join up with the bridgehead established across the Rhine River in the vicinity of Drusenheim. The apparent plan of the German High Command was to quickly join forces with the Drusenheim thrust before the Americans could regroup their forces. If rapidly fused, this joint force would be in a position to smash through to Strassbourg. This accomplishment would have made good Heinrich Himmler's boast that German troops would be back in Strassbourg by 30 January 1945.** With the large Alsatian city in their hands, the enemy would be in a strategic position to add support to the Germans contained in the vicinity of Colmar by American and French forces.***

Enemy infantry type units identified in the battle of Hatten and Rittershoffen were (at Hatten) 1st Battalion, 35th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, 1st Battalion, 119th Panzer Grenadier Regiment (later shifted to Rittershoffen) and the 2d Battalion 119th Panzer Grenadier Regiment, all of the 26th Panzer Grenadier Division. These units participated in

* - Operations Instructions #9, Hq, 14th Armd Div., 120030 Jan 1945

** - G-2, 79th Infantry Division, Major Joseph W. Knott

*** - Ibid

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the first attack against Hatten on 9 January 1945. On 11 January the 220th Panzer Engineer Battalion of the 21st Panzer Division showed up. On 14 January the 1st and 3d Battalions of the 20th Parachute Regiment made their appearance and were followed the next day by the 2nd Battalion, 20th Parachute Regiment, all of the 7th Parachute Division. January 16th saw the 104th Volks Grenadier Regiment of the 47th Volks Grenadier Division added to the force in Hatten. (At Rittershoffen) the 2d Battalion, 125th Panzer Grenadier Regiment and the 1st Battalion 192d Panzer Grenadier of the 21st Panzer Division engaged American forces on 10 January 1945. In the ensuing days the 1st Battalion, 119th Panzer Grenadier Regiment left Hatten to join the forces in Rittershoffen. On 13 January the 2d Battalion, 192d Panzer Grenadier Regiment, 21st Panzer Division appeared in Rittershoffen. Elements of the 104th Volks Grenadier Regiment arrived in Rittershoffen on 16 January. The following day the 103d Volks Grenadier Regiment were identified in Rittershoffen. These two latter regiments are of the 47th Volks Grenadier Division. These units were supported throughout by organizations identified as the 5th Tank Battalion, 22d Tank Regiment, 21st Panzer Reconnaissance Battalion, 125th Panzer Reconnaissance Battalion, 25th Anti-tank Battalion, 155th Panzer Artillery Regiment, 1151st General Artillery Battalion and 1152d General Headquarters Artillery Battalion.*

Earlier attempts had been made to restore the main line of resistance when at 1300 on 9 January, Company "A", 48th Tank Battalion (Combat Command "A") was sent from Kuhlendorf to Rittershoffen with the

* - G-2 Report, 14th Armored Division

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mission of assisting the 242d Infantry in straightening the line. An unknown number of enemy tanks were reported at that time to be flanking Rittershoffen from the south, while to the north German personnel carriers and tanks were maneuvering into position. At approximately 1420 one platoon ("A" - 48th Tank Battalion) went into position on the south flank east of Rittershoffen to meet the threat of the Nazi southern envelopment. The platoon consisting of four medium tanks engaged sixteen German tanks and took the enemy under fire. Six medium sized enemy tanks were knocked out without the loss of either American men or equipment.* The remainder of all the German armor fled eastward. With its position stable in Rittershoffen, elements of the 242d Infantry and 48th Tank Battalion planned a coordinated attack on Hatten. The attack jumped off at 1710, January 9, with one platoon of tanks and one platoon of infantry advancing to the east of either side of Hatten. The assault on the northern flank of Hatten met little opposition and established itself on the north edge of town. The attack on the south side encountered some resistance, knocked out one tank, one personnel carrier and a staff car. The westerly most portion of Hatten was then secured.** Relief of Company "A", 48th Tank Battalion was made at 2230, 9 January with a tank destroyer platoon of the 827th Tank Destroyer Battalion and "F" and "G" Companies of the 315th Infantry in town.*** The enemy was still strongly positioned in the west of Hatten after previously driving the 242d into the western part of Hatten,**** which is a story within itself.

* - Hq, 48th Tank Bn, 9 Jan 45. /s/ Major James N. Studer, S-3

** - Ibid

*** - Hq, 48th Tank Bn, "Activities - 9 Jan 1945" /s/ James N. Studer, S-3

**** - S-2 Report, 79th Infantry Division

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At 0830 January 10, Company "A", 48th Tank Battalion, was given the mission of capturing the terrain on either side of the road running southeast out of Hatten. This section would have cut one of the enemy's main arteries of supply into Hatten.* Shortly after the attack jumped off, "A" Company's (48th Tank Battalion) mission was changed in order to counteract the threat of an impending enemy attack to the northwest of Hatten.** The bulk of "A" Company moved to stop the attack to the northwest, leaving a covering force to contain the enemy on the south side of Hatten.

"A" Company (48th Tank Battalion) then assisted the 315th Infantry in repelling an attack of approximately two hundred infantry and six tanks.*** One German tank was knocked out with one probable and the enemy attack was successfully repulsed. At noon the remainder of the 48th Tank Battalion closed in the Niederbetschdorf area. At approximately 1530, "B" Company, 48th Tank Battalion was in battle position directly south of Rittershoffen and "C" Company, 48th Tank Battalion, moved into battle position north and east of Rittershoffen.

Probing infantry patrols were sent to the railroad station (17.8 - 33.2) and found the place strongly defended. Other patrols found that the major portion of Hatten was occupied except for the southwestern part.**** At approximately 1600 the 2d Battalion, 315th Infantry and tanks from "B" Company, 48th Tank Battalion attacked through the gap between Hatten and the woods to the South. The assault progressed in spite of intense small arms, machine gun and cannon fire from the enemy. This

* - See Map

** - Operations Report, 48th Tank Bn, 10 Jan 45

*** - Ibid

**** - Operations Report - 48th Tank Bn, 10 Jan 45

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came from the southwest edge of Hatten. One tank strongly defended by German riflemen and machine gun fire was destroyed by a bazooka team from Company "F", 315th Infantry and another by tanks of "B" Company, 48th Tank Battalion.* The enemy quickly replaced their losses and hostile fire from the southeast of Hatten knocked out the leading American tank. Communications on two platoon leaders' tanks failed. Four American tanks were hit by fire from the vicinity of Hatten. At 1735 the units were ordered to withdraw from the attack.**

Meanwhile, "C" Company, 48th Tank Battalion and Infantrymen of the 315th Infantry Regiment attacked to the northeast of Hatten with the objective of seizing the high ground on either side of the road to the northeast of Hatten, thereby cutting the German's connecting link with Stundwiller.*** The enemy was well entrenched in this sector with tanks and AT guns. Six enemy tanks were hit with AP (75mm) ammo which did not ricochet but the extent of their damage is unknown. Three American tanks were disabled by the enemy's AT and tank fire. This attack was called off at the same time as the one to the south of Hatten. After withdrawing, the tanks outposted positions on the eastern edge of Rittershoffen beginning at 1730, 10 January.****

Enemy reinforcements were brought into Hatten during the early hours of 11 January.***** An intense artillery concentration preceded an attack on Rittershoffen. The enemy assault was launched with infantry using draws to the northeast of Rittershoffen as avenues of

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- * - S-2 Report, 135th Infantry Regiment.
 - ** - Operations Report - 48th Tank Bn, 10 Jan 45.
 - *** - See Map.
 - **** - Operations Report - 48th Tank Bn, 10 Jan 45.
 - ***** - S-2 Journal, 315th Infantry Regiment.

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approach. Kraut infantrymen managed to infiltrate into Rittershoffen on the north and east sides where they were reinforced by tanks.* Using tanks and half tracks for local security the enemy infantry gained control of the northern and eastern portion of Rittershoffen. Small but bitter engagements of CCA and the 3d Battalion, 315th Infantry were fought with the enemy who held on tenaciously.**

At daylight 12 January, CCA and the 315th Infantry Regiment were to exert heavy pressure on Rittershoffen and screen the passage of GCB whose mission was to seize Hatten from the north with one battalion allowing the passage of a following battalion to cut roads east of Hatten.*** The attack was intended to restore the VI Corps' MLR and thus relieve elements of the 2d Battalion, 315th Infantry Regiment and remnants of the 2d Battalion, 242d Infantry which were isolated in the westerly most buildings of Hatten. These troops had suffered heavily from enemy attacks since 9 January 1945.****

A fifteen-minute American artillery concentration fell on the southeast edge of Rittershoffen while CCA poised for the attack at 0750, 12 January. After the artillery barrage, tanks from the 48th Tank Battalion brought fire on the southeast edge of Rittershoffen to support foot soldiers who attacked at 0840 and were repulsed by small arms fire from the enemy.***** 48th Tank Battalion armor brought more fire into the area southeast of Rittershoffen and lost two medium tanks by AT guns in the procedure.***** Neither tanks nor infantry succeeded

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- * - Ibid
 - ** - S-2 Journal, 315th Infantry Regiment
 - *** - G-3, 14th Armd Div, Lt. Col. Joe C. Lambert
 - **** - Ibid
 - ***** - Operations Report - 48th Tank Bn, 10 Jan 1945
 - ***** - Operations of 48th Tk Bn, Hq, 12 Jan 45, /s/ James N. Studer

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in driving the Germans from their strongly held positions on the southeastern side of Rittershoffen.* Tanks and infantrymen of CCA joined the 3d Battalion, 315th Infantry in consolidating positions on the western and southwestern side of Rittershoffen. Two companies of the 48th Tank Battalion (CCA) withdrew to Niederbetschdorf during the evening.** CCB was unsuccessful in its attempt to flank Hatten from the north. A large dug-in force of enemy infantry supported by tanks and heavy artillery fire broke up the advance to the north of Rittershoffen. CCB established a defensive position north of Rittershoffen along the road leading to Leiterswiller. CCB did not advance beyond this position during the ensuing days.*** The 2d Battalion of the 315th Infantry (79th Div) and remnants of the 242d Infantry (42d Div) were still cut off in west Hatten. The 213th Field Artillery Battalion fired medical supplies into these units.****

During the darkness of 12-13 January, Combat Command Reserve, commanded by Colonel D. H. Hudelson, was moved into Niederbetschdorf and prepared to attack Hatten from the south on the morning of 13 January 1945. This effort, if successfully completed, would cut off the German troops in Rittershoffen and restore the main line of resistance.*****

Preparatory to crossing the line of departure, which was the road running south from Rittershoffen (Vic 16-33) the 19th AIB (CCR) deployed with "A" Company on the left, "B" Company on the right and "C" Company

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- * - Ibid
 - ** - Ibid
 - *** - S-3 Journal, CCA, 14th Armd Div
 - **** - History of Hq, 79th Div Arty, 1 Jan - 31 Jan 1945
 - ***** - 19th AIB Journal, 14th Armd Div

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in reserve. Upon reaching the open field enemy fire was directed at the Americans from southeast Rittershoffen. To avoid this fire, the assault Battalion was moved hurriedly to defilade on the southern side of the railroad tracks. "A" Company retained their position in the field, some men using ditches along the line of departure for protection. "B" Company, to the right rear of "A" Company, pulled into the woods south of the railroad tracks to avoid a concentration of tracer and ball ammo fire from enemy automatic weapons, which was also coming from the southern portion of Rittershoffen. The woods, although sparsely covered with large trees, afforded adequate protection for "B" Company. These same woods were being screened by the 94th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron.

As a result of this harassing fire the jump off was delayed approximately ten minutes. However, the companies soon reorganized, directed small arms against Rittershoffen and pressed eastward. Friendly artillery laid smoke to cover the advance of the attack.

The field stretched before the attacking companies offered little in the way of protection. The flat open terrain was only broken by furrows lightly covered with snow. The plowed field stretched east toward Hatten rising in a gradual slope to the north of Hatten where the enemy was well entrenched. The Germans were using "Magenot Line" pillboxes, for the protection of anti-tank guns. These pill boxes were strategically located and protected any attempt at the high ground to the north of Hatten and the flat area to the east of Hatten. These formidable defenses were well used to hold what the enemy had gained and to keep the Americans from interrupting the flow of supplies and reinforcements which came in via the roads south, east and north of Hatten.

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"A" Company, 19th AIB, making slightly faster progress, pressed the assault and reached a line approximately 300 yards west of the railroad station (17.6-33.3) where heavy mortar, artillery, small arms and automatic weapon fire halted their advance. This fire was coming from the buildings on the southeastern side of Hatten as well as from dug in enemy positions in the same area.

Meanwhile, "B" Co had pulled back slightly at the jump-off to relieve the bunched up situation, when then existed. "B" Company worked forward, drawing small arms fire from the cemetery (18-33) to its front. At the same time enemy 88mm and AT fire began falling on the men in the field.* The infantrymen called for tank support and 2d Lt. Gray Thoron radioed via SCR 300 for the vital armor to come forward.

Five medium tanks, "C" Company, 47th Tank Battalion moved across the field supported by direct tank fire from the remaining two platoons of "C" Company, which were firing their 75mm and 76mm cannons into the southern edge of Hatten. Other tanks from the 47th Tank Battalion were also firing at Hatten and Rittershoffen from the same position.

The five tanks commanded by 2d Lt. Seth Sprague proceeded boldly across the open field in line formation to give closer support to "A" and "B" Companies of the 19th AIB. The assault armor drew heavy fire as it sped eastward. The tanks followed a route approximately 200 yards south of the railroad tracks. Germans pumped AT and artillery fire from the direction of Hatten. All the infantrymen hugged the earth in the face of this fire directed at the tanks. Pfc James R. Benzinger,

* - 19th AIB Journal.

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"B" Company, view the "sickening sight of a helmet spinning end over end some forty feet in the air". The helmet belonged to Pfc Zolan Newman, victim of a direct hit by an 88mm AP shell. Fire from the same type weapon knocked out three of five tanks before the other two were forced to withdraw. No one was seen leaving the stricken tanks, two of which burned immediately.* The withdrawing tanks took up another firing position. After traveling westward approximately two hundred yards, the remaining two tanks of Sprague's platoon opened fire with cannon (75mm) and machine gun into the Hatten railroad station. The American tanks fired approximately ten minutes and then withdrew.** While the infantrymen were deliberating what course of action to take, the enemy opened up with mortars and machine gun fire, inflicting casualties on the foot troops spread out across the field and sheltered in vacated enemy slit trenches and fox-holes. Radio contact was attempted by both "A" and "B" Companies but these devices failed to function properly.

Several tries were made to press the advance but extremely heavy enemy artillery, mortar, machine gun and small arms fire broke up the infantry endeavors. Tanks from another platoon of "A" Company, 47th Tank Battalion attempted to take the same route that Lt. Sprague's tanks had used in an effort to aid the infantrymen. Of the five tanks sent forward, two were knocked out and the other three tanks continued to fire on Hatten until, out of ammunition, they were forced to withdraw, under heavy fire.

Aid men administered first-aid to the wounded and were not deliberately fired upon by the enemy.*** Any other movement of the troops

* - 1st Lt. Russel T. Blair, "B" Co, 19th AIB
** - Ibid
*** - 2d Lt. Gray Thoran, "B" Co, 19th AIB

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however, brought down small arms and machine gun fire from Hatten.

The 2d and 3d Platoons of "A" Company receiving the brunt of the enemy fire began to withdraw. This action was unknown to Capt. Ernest M. Spokes, Commanding Officer, "A" Company, who, with other men, had sought refuge in a vacated enemy bunker on the open field. In the bunker with Spokes was 2d Lt. Robert L. Palecek, FO, of the 499th Armd Field Artillery Battalion, who was attempting to adjust smoke and fire on the southern edge of Hatten to shield the troops*. Palecek was using an SCR 300, and because of communication difficulty was only partially successful in his attempt.

When the platoons of "A" Company withdrew, the north flank of "B" Company was left exposed. Realizing this, and having no radio contact, Lt. Thoron ordered T/Sgt. J. Conroy to contact Captain Thomas E. Conboy, Commanding Officer, Company "B" who was positioned at the edge of the woods, (16.9-32.6). In order to make himself as light as possible, Sgt. Conroy doffed his gas mask, rifle and all other heavy equipment. The Sgt. ran under fire until exhausted then rested. After racing approximately 250 yards the Sgt. reached Capt. Conboy. When he had regained his breath, Conroy gave the company's situation in five words, "Piss poor, gotta' get out". Capt Conboy tried to contact battalion for permission to withdraw his company.

Meanwhile, 1st Lt. Russel T. Blair (Merkel, Texas) commanding "B" Company men in the field, gave the order for withdrawal to his men. Blair assumed that "A" Company had received a withdrawal notice and because he had no communication did not know otherwise. Realizing "B" Company's left flank was exposed by "A" Company's departure, Blair established machine gun and small arms as a base of fire and sent the

* - 19th AIB Journal.

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wounded men back first. Light machine gunners Pfc Roy Thompson and Pfc Andrew Fetcbeck, both laid down an able protecting cover with .30 Caliber while all of "B" Company infiltrated back. Thompson had no tripod for his weapon so he laid it on the edge of a vacated Jerry fox-hole to steady it. Thompson kept up this fire even after being injured.

As "B" Company withdrew, BAR-Man Ian Radley was all over the field helping wounded men get started to the rear.* With the exception of Capt. Spokes and his men in the bunker, "A" and "B" Companies reached the edge of the woods where the difficult task of reorganizing the men began. A defensive line was set up, approximately 1000 yards southeast of the line of defense in Foret D'Aschbruck where the troops began to dig in. Rations, ammo, radios and other equipment lost or destroyed in the fight on the field were brought up to the men.

Captain Spokes and his men remained in the dugout. There were thirteen soldiers in all with the "A" Company Commander, including six casualties, three of whom were litter cases. The injured men had crawled into the bunker in a state of shock and were then treated for injury. To relieve their nervous tension, Capt. Spokes assured the men that the situation was well in hand, knowing full well that their position was desperate. Several more men squirmed into one shelter of the bunker to boost the total to seventeen men.

One of these men, Pfc Marlowe D. Gebhart said, "Captain Spokes, I'll have to sign a statement of charges for the carbine I lost" and then held up the stump of a hand that had been holding the lost carbine. After receiving first aid, Gebhart kidded with the rest of the men and helped to

* - Capt. Ernest M. Spokes, CO, Co "A", 19th AIB

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keep up their spirits.

The additional men did not help the already crowded situation in the bunker which was approximately ten feet long, five feet wide and three feet deep. "But it sure felt good to get off that field and into the ground."* Radio contact was unsuccessfully attempted with the 19th AIB by Lt. Palecek, the artillery forward observer, to get smoke placed on the southern edge of Hatten so the remaining men in the field could withdraw. Getting nowhere with the radio, Lt. Palecek asked Capt. Spokes if he could try to make it back across the field to get the badly needed smoke. Spokes agreed and Palecek took off under fire. He finally made it back.

Captain Spokes attempted to get the SCR 300 in working order. Contact was finally established and at approximately 1500, smoke began to fall. Palecek's voice was heard over the radio saying, "Get ready to make a break for it, as the tanks come up." At the same time a platoon of tanks from "A" Company, 47th Tank Battalion passed Spokes' position, laying 75mm and 76mm cannon and machine gun fire on the enemy. Spokes withdrew his group in spite of enemy small arms and mortar fire.

Shrapnel-marked jeep ambulances evacuated the wounded from the open field amidst spasmodic enemy fire. An advance aid station was established at the railroad station, (16.0-32.9). Initial treatment and plasma was administered to the patients. Sixty-two casualties were carried into this advance aid station by vehicles and litter teams from the field. Wounded were questioned as to location of other men whom they had seen hit. Some of the men exaggerated the number but every clue was traced until all wounded were cared for.

* - Sgt. Jack B. Mooney, Yonkers, N.Y.

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About 1530 hours American tanks and 104 American soldiers proceeded from the western end of Hatten south to the railroad tracks and then west to the line of departure. These men were remnants of the 242d Infantry who had been badly battered in Hatten. The men of the 242d Infantry took up positions in the Foret D'Aeschbruck.*

At 1600 troops of "A" and "B" and "C" Companies loaded 15 to 20 men on each of the light and medium tanks of the 47th Tank Battalion and started toward Hatten. Small arms and machine gun fire opened on the column from the southeastern edge of Hatten, but caused no known casualties. The mounted infantrymen could see burned-out American and German tanks littering their entire route across the open field.** These k.o.'d tanks were a result of previous engagements and the present one being waged for the towns of Hatten and Rittershoffen.***

Light enemy artillery and mortar fire followed the tanks across the field. As the armor got closer to town enemy mortar fire increased in volume and accuracy, forcing the infantry to dismount approximately 300 yards from the town. The medium tanks went into Hatten via "Y" street which was later used as a supply route, and the rest withdrew to the vicinity of the MLR. The dismounted infantry made their way to the southwestern side of town where contact was established with the 315th Infantry Battalion. Men of both Battalions took up defensive positions within the badly battered houses on both sides of Main Street and "Y" Street to a point approximately (17.4-33.7).**** The 19th AIB troops were split up among the 315th Infantrymen so the newcomers would benefit by the exper-

* - See Map

** - See Map

*** - 19th AIB Journal

**** - See Map

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ience of the soldiers already in Hatten.

A platoon of "C" Company, 19th AIB, situated on the north side of Main Street received a local enemy attack during the night. The enemy came in from the north and with tanks and bazooka fire blasted the platoon out of the houses they were occupying. The "C" Company Platoon took up a defensive position in a house on the south side of main street. Amidst the blaze and confusion, three Germans followed the platoon into the house. The Krauts threw hand grenades and blasted away with "burp" guns. Sgt. Durwood Mefford heard one of the Krauts holler in clear English, "Why don't you Yankee bastards give up?". In reply to this question, the Americans opened up with small arms and BAR fire from within the darkened hallway. The boisterous German fell dead still clutching an American M-1 rifle.* The other two fled and the local enemy attack subsided.

At approximately 2300, 2d Lt. Walter Dickson, communications officer, contacted Lt. Blair in order to get four men to help carry wire from two light tanks which had pulled into the southern edge of "Y" street, now serving as the main supply and evacuation route for Hatten. Dickson got the four men and started down "Y" street. The group of Americans were surprised by five Germans who stepped from behind a building with hands raised and said, "Kamerad". Dickson called Blair to take the PW's off his hands so they could continue after the wire. Blair's men searched the Krauts and questioned them. One of the PW's said they were five of a nine man patrol. The remaining Boche showed up in a house occupied by "C" Company. One of the Germans stepped out of the kitchen into the dining room occupied by the Americans. This German said, "Kamerad". The Kraut was told to step into the room. When he did

* - Many Germans were using equipment captured from the 242d Regiment when they were forced to withdraw hurriedly.

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a Jerry to the rear opened up with a "burp" gun directed at the Americans. The German missed his mark and he and the others fled. Pvt. Choddick shot the German who had said "Kamerad" and then fired at the fleeing group, accounting for one more. Other incidents of the same nature were prevalent throughout the campaign.

Dead Germans were strewn all over the area and were used as decoys by enemy patrols who attempted to infiltrate into American positions. GI's were very conscious of the closeness of the enemy during the night.

The dark hours seemed to be ten times as long as the daylight hours. A constant vigil was maintained in a perimeter defense. Fox-holes were dug on all sides of house foundations. These holes were used to prevent the enemy from getting into the protective rubble of the buildings. The men in the extreme western part of Hatten felt uneasy about the enemy troops in Rittershoffen.* The Germans held the eastern part of Rittershoffen which was approximately one-half mile away connected with Hatten by means of a first class road on a slight gradient.

Plans were made for a coordinated attack on the northern road running east and west in Hatten.** With this section of Hatten in American hands, the protected enemy route north of Hatten to Rittershoffen would be under control. Both tanks and infantry were to combine their efforts in an attempt to drive the enemy from this sector of Hatten on the morning of 14 January. After medium tanks of the 47th Tank Battalion had moved into position to support the attack, "A" Company of the 19th AIB and "E" Company of the 315th Infantry Regiment jumped-off. "A" Company

* - 1st Lt. Russel T. Blair, "B" Co, 19th AIB

** - See Map

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flanked the northern street from the west while "E" Company came up from the southeast. The plan was to join in a pincer movement enveloping the street from both ends while the tanks drove up the middle.*

Bazooka, machine gun and small arms fire met the American attack. One of the tanks was hit but continued forward until surrounded by the enemy. The armored crew were taken prisoner. Wounded men of the tank were treated by the Germans as the infantry pressed the attack and finally drove the enemy back. A defense was set up occupying a clump of houses on the northwestern end of Hatten on the northern street running east and west.

At approximately 2100, "A" and "E" Companies received a severe attack from German Infantry who swarmed down from the slope to the north of their positions. This enemy assault was supported by tank fire from the north and east as well as mortar fire from the same directions.** One enemy tank worked its way west on the northern east-west street. Another eased down from the high ground to the north. The result was a terrific cross-fire of 88mm and machine gun bullets. Jerry pressed his advance as the Americans were forced to withdraw from the houses which the enemy set afire using incendiary bullets and flame throwers. After the buildings caught fire, civilians tried to leave their hiding places in the cellars. The civilians made the mistake of exposing themselves in the street. When they did, German fire cut them down. A group of Alsatian men, women and children became entrapped in the basement of a smashed building. The Krauts turned the nozzle of a flame-thrower into the building on the imprisoned civilians. The resulting screams of horror and pain could be

* - Capt. Ernest M. Spokes, CO, Co "A", 19th AIB
** - Ibid

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heard over the noisy tanks, cannon and machine gun fire.*

Both companies made their way westward, "mouseholing". This term is used to denote crawling through the blown-out sides and windows of buildings rather than running from one building to another. This method was a safer means of moving up and down the streets. The units worked their way south to the main street joining up with the other companies occupying the houses there. Heavy American artillery fire broke up Jerry's attack. The units consolidated their positions.

At approximately 1730, a strong enemy attack commenced from the east and drove "F" Company out of three houses they were holding east of "Y" intersection. "B" Company was sent forward and successfully contained the enemy.**

In order to regain the three houses that "F" Company had lost, 2d Lt. Richard M. Young, Jr., Commanding "C" Company was ordered to counter-attack as soon as he could get his forces together. Due to an intense artillery and mortar barrage laid down by the enemy, it was some time before the men were coordinated. By the time "C" Company was ready to jump off, two medium tanks of "A" Company, 47th Tank Battalion were positioned on Main Street to support the attack. Four more tanks stayed in the rear as covering fire. At 1915 all units began their advance through the rubble of houses lining bothsides of the main street. Close contact was necessary due to the poor visibility in the darkness which was not helped any by the smoke and dust which enemy HE shells were kicking up. Demolished buildings blocked the path of the Americans. Smoldering ashes blinded and choked the men as they inched forward. A medium tank kept pace with

* - Men of "A" and "B" Companies, 19th AIB.
** - 2d Lt. Gray Thoron, "B" Co, 19th AIB.

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the men of "C" Company and slowly clanked up the rubble-littered main street.

At "Y" intersection, the advancing units were halted in anticipation of making close contact with the enemy in the next few moments. The tank sought the cover of "Y" street running south off main street. As the group moved forward once more the tank jockeyed into a position which found it silhouetted against a burning building. From the west end of main street, two 75mm rounds from an American tank found their marks in the turret and engine compartment of the tank at "Y" intersection, barely distinguishable in the smoky haze. These 75mm rounds came from an American tank parked on the western outskirts of Hatten who thought the silhouetted tank to be enemy.* The stricken tank caught fire. Small arms and 75mm shells within the vehicle began to explode. "C" Company men on the south side of main street were reluctant to pass the exploding armor. After hesitating momentarily the infantrymen swung south of the buildings on main street and passed the blazing tank. Lt. Young went back to bring up another tank to support his men who continued forward. The relief tanker did not think he could make it past the burning tank which was by this time an inferno. Young convinced the tanker that he could get past by gunning his own tank in a burst of speed.** The tanker said, "O.K., I'll try".

Meanwhile, "C" Company had "mouseholed" through the devastated buildings until enemy bazooka, intense small arms and machine gun fire halted their forward motion. The supporting tank relieved the situation by speeding past the burning tank and firing into the enemy. "C"

* - 2d Lt. Richard M. Young, Jr., "C" Co, 19th AIB
** - Ibid

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Company again pressed forward. The tank pulled to the south side of main street out of the field of fire from the slight bend in the road ahead. This bend was the crucial point in the entire village. Jerry tanks were around the eastern side of the bend, American armor commanded the western side of the bend. American or German tanks dared not protrude more than the barrel of their cannon around either side of the corner.

After gaining the rubble of two more buildings on both sides of main street the enemy once more held up the advance with bazooka, machine gun and small arms fire.

The American medium again came forward and fired its 75mm and machine gun into suspected enemy positions. The Germans quickly retaliated with a barrage of bazooka fire which forced the tank to withdraw. In an effort to flank the enemy from the south, Capt. Harold S. Persky led a platoon of tanks (Co "C", 47th Tank Bn) to the south of the main street in Hatten. Three of these tanks were knocked out by German bazooka and artillery fire. The remaining two tanks withdrew to the assembly area at the foot of "Y" Street.*

The 2d and AT platoons of "C" Company combined into one unit. The total of twenty men were brought up to aid the other platoons of C Company. These support units enabled their parent organization to gain one more building thus securing all that "F" Company had lost. The operation had taken five hours to accomplish and "C" Company men were weary as they made ready to hold what was left of the ground they had captured.

A German counterattack was not long in coming. One hour later an enemy force infiltrated from the north into the 3d platoon's "C" Co, positions. In the face of bazooka and "burp" gun fire, the platoon

* - Marked "X" on the map

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withdrew to the rear. This action left the men of "C" Company on the southern side of main street, with an exposed left flank. To overcome this situation, the men moved to the rear approximately 75 yards, where they drew abreast of the 3d platoon on the northern side of main street. The units held good fields of fire over the desolated waste of the broken building in this spot and decided to hold. The enemy attempted to advance westward but was quickly dispersed with hand grenades, BAR and small arms fire. "C" Company spent the remainder of the night munching "K" Rations and good naturedly "bitching" about the battle of Hatten, the army as a whole, and all things in general. This action was typical of the small unit engagements in the ensuing days. Americans would attack and win several shattered buildings. Then the Germans would counterattack. If the enemy infantry could not advance, their tanks and artillery came to support them. This was true of both sides in the see-saw struggle for Hatten*, as well as Rittershoffen.**

During the dark hours of the morning, elements of "A" Troop of the 94th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron reinforced "C" Company in their forward position. The enemy continued to fire intermittent small arms, machine gun, bazooka, mortar and artillery into the western edge of Hatten. One of the artillery rounds accounted for another medium tank of "A" Company parked on the western outskirts of Hatten.

Much of the battle was an artillery duel between the Americans and Germans. All through the period losses were sustained on both sides by the constant pounding of artillery pieces firing HE, W/P, and AP ammunition. As many as fifteen American Field Artillery Battalions fired at one time on Hatten during the ensuing days.*** Artillery shells with

* - Pfc James R. Benzinger
** - S-2 Report, 315th Infantry Regiment
*** - Major Forest T. Green, CO, 19th AIB

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delayed fuzes went clear to the cellars of enemy occupied houses before exploding. White phosphorous was used by both Americans and Germans. The enemy was using white phosphorous apparently captured previously from other units, because they do not have any of their own.*

Illustrative of the amount of artillery thrown into the general area of Hatten and Rittershoffen are the figures taken from the 499th and 500th Armd Field Artillery Battalions.* These two field artillery battalions fired approximately 3400 rounds of high explosive and approximately 400 rounds of white phosphorous from light artillery pieces (105mm Howitzers) on different days during the battle. Everything including 60 and 81mm mortars, 105 S/P guns and howitzers, 155mm guns and howitzers, 240mm howitzers and 8" guns were used by American artillery to harass and repel the Germans. VI Corps artillery, in addition to other supporting units fired on the area - Hatten and Rittershoffen from the period 9 January to 20 January.****

At 0600 15 January, Major Forest T. Green, CO of 19th AIB, informed Lt. Young via SCR 300 that "E" Company of the 315th Infantry would attack through "C" Company's positions. At 0815 assault formations of "E" Company came down the main street to "C" Company's positions. Lt. Young called to the officer in charge and gave him the situation. He added a word of caution about getting the attacking forces into the protection of the rubble. The officer nodded approval but kept his men on the street.*****"E" Company continued down the avenue approximately 50 yards east of "C" Company's position where enemy machine gun, bazooka, "burp" guns, small arms fire and flame throwers inflicted extremely heavy

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- * - G-2 Report, 79th Div, and 14th Armd Div
 - ** - Figures of Div Arty show that 40,000 rounds of arty were expended
 - *** - S-3 Report, 14th Armd Div Arty
 - **** - Colonel Maurice K. Kurtz, 14th Armd D.A.C.
 - ***** - Lt. Richard M. Young, Jr., "C" Co, 19th AIB

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casualties on the attacking soldiers.* The intense fire caused the men of "E" Company to withdraw. They did so under the supporting fire of "C" Company.

While "E" Company was withdrawing Lt. Young was called to Battalion Headquarters to tell what had happened. The Lieutenant worked his way back to the CP located in the ruins of a blasted building. Young spoke above the pathetic whispering of the injured men who lay on the floor. He told the group of battalion staff officers what he had seen. Major Green then said, "Young, you'll have to make the attack, since "E" Company has failed." The Lieutenant replied, "Sir, how do you think my men will feel after seeing what happened to "Easy" Company?" Major Green thought a moment, then said, "All right, we'll see Lt. Col. Earl F. Holton."*** The two officers went back to Colonel Holton's CP located in the cellar of a blown-out building. The men made their way down the rubble laden stairs into a crowded smoky room, miserably lighted by a few candles. Major Green explained the situation to Colonel Holton. The colonel listened and very emphatically said, "Charlie Company WILL attack."

Lt. Young informed his platoon leaders of the circumstances. One said, "Are we the only Goddamn company in the Army?", another platoon leader added, "Why those silly bastards". Young cut them short by saying, "Yeah, I know, but we're going anyway.". To support the attack, the AT and 2d platoons formed a heavy base of fire with machine guns, BARs and rifles. The 1st and 3d platoons jumped off. The men were mad as they crouched low and plodded through the rubble of the buildings. Their anger must have helped because the enemy was routed out and "C" Company again reached the ruins they had been forced to evacuate the night before. Not a man in "C" Company was hit during the attack. The men

* - History, 79th Div Arty, 1 Jan - 31 Jan 1945

** - Commanding Officer of 2d Battalion, 315th Infantry, in charge of all elements in Hatten

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felt better as they again prepared to hold what they had. The soldiers took up positions behind corners of blown-out walls, heavy fallen timber and other debris offering protection in the semblance of the houses and barns they were occupying. The stay was again short-lived when the Germans attacked in force with bazookas, rifle grenades, small arms and machine gun fire. A medium tank attempted to support the Americans and came forward through the rubble. The tank fired two rounds from its 75mm before heavy bazooka fire forced its withdrawal. After the American tank departed "C" Company was also forced to withdraw in the face of heavy enemy fire of all descriptions. The Germans followed "C" Company back until "B" Company was brought up to stop the enemy. Two Tiger tanks made their appearance from the East. American tanks and tank destroyers attempted to get into positions to battle the Tigers, but were prevented by one of the firing Panzer vehicles. The other enemy tank fired into the buildings that American infantrymen were "mouseholing" through. A German light machine gun crew maneuvered down from the north. The Germans were hidden behind a manure pile and were firing their weapon down an alley between two buildings. This fire prevented the men from "mouseholing" past the alley. Lt. Blair saw one of the Germans' legs protruding from behind the manure pile. Blair carefully estimated the distance from the end of the German's foot to the apparent position of his body. The Lieutenant pumped three rounds from his carbine through the manure pile. He heard the German scream. The other Kraut took off.

Enemy tracer bullets from the east were fired into the combination of houses and barns which are prevalent throughout the Alsatian area. Hay within the barns soon caught fire. The Americans used the smoke to advantage since it covered their withdrawal. At the same time several

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P-47's strafed and bombed the eastern section of Hatten as well as the high ground to the north of town.* The combination of planes and artillery took the impetus from the enemy attack. American infantrymen established themselves in the proximity of the first street running north, west of "Y" intersection.

An OP was established in a building called the "Fort". This concrete structure was located on the southern side of main street, just east of "Y" intersection.** The "Fort" had been hit by artillery, tank and mortar fire. It looked it. Gaping holes were in the eastern and northern sides of the walls. Snow covered the blasted floors within the edifice. The roof was a thing of the past as were the windows, shutters and black-out blinds. "B" Company and a platoon of "C" Company occupied the "Fort's" three undamaged rooms on the western side of the building. From the shattered upstairs section of the "Fort", a constant vigil was maintained for enemy activity. In the cellar, aid men worked over the many wounded who could not be evacuated. Between the "Fort" and the first street to the east which ran north, outposts of twelve men occupied the heaping ruins of each building.

The men were a little jittery that night and more than once fired in the direction of noises which later proved to be stray horses and other animals aimlessly wandering about the desolated village.

During the dark hours information was called down from the outpost that an enemy tank was approaching from the east, along main street. Its approximate location was given. Lt. Young fumbled with his flashlight and artillery concentration map to determine the registration

* - Lt. Russel T. Blair, Co "B"; S/Sgt, Edw. S. Pidgeon, Sgt. Earle A. Simpson, 47th Tank Bn
** - See Map

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number nearest the oncoming tank. Before he got the number, the tank let fly with its 88mm at the eastern wall of the "Fort". The blast injured several men. When the dust had settled Young discovered himself unhurt but minus map and flashlight. The Lieutenant guessed at the concentration number and called the information back via SCR 300. Jerry let go with another round injuring several more men. American artillery began landing in the vicinity of the enemy tank and chased it back.

Lt. Robert Lingle and Sgt. Williams, both of "C" Company, directed artillery fire all night at different intervals. The men brought the fire in very close attempting to catch an chance of attack on the American positions. When the artillery caught any of them, Germans could be heard screaming for help in agonized voices. As the hours wore on, their screams gave way to moaning and heavy sobbing. Jerry used an old trick in an attempt to confuse the Americans. While the American artillery was dropping on his forces, Jerry dumped a few rounds into the American positions to make it seem that our own artillery was falling short. This ruse tended to confuse anyone attempting to direct the artillery concentrations.

Behind the "Fort" was located a barn with a stone base reaching upward approximately six feet. A guard was maintained within the barn to prevent any infiltration from the south and southeast. Toward dawn on the 16th of January, Pfc Paul "Pop" Biesel (38 years old, Ass't mail clerk) was observing through a shell hole in the wall when two Germans approached from the southeast. "Pop" was scared to death and afraid to fire for fear of missing the targets. He waited until the Krauts were ten yards from the barn before squeezing the trigger. One died instantly. It took three more rounds to finish the other.

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Before dawn on the morning of 16 January, a seventeen man assault platoon from "A" Company went forward to the northwest sector of Hatten to "feel-out" the enemy. The platoon routed two Germans out of a building and took them prisoners. The Jerries were "pumped". Information was gained that a force of three German companies were preparing to attack from the north and east. S/Sgt Albert Carey was sent back to inform battalion of the situation. Carey started toward the rear. The platoon continued toward the northern "east-west" road running into the attack. 2d Lt. Joseph Osborne, in charge of the American platoon, radioed back to battalion on a static frequency, "We are being attacked by three companies of Jerries". Reception on the battalion SCR 300 was bad. The Commanding Officer, 19th AIB, thinking the message to be, "We are being attacked by THREE Jerries", radioed back, "Continue the assault". The radio went dead and futile attempts were made to contact the platoon once more. The assault platoon engaged in a fire fight with the leading elements of the three company infantry attack.

Meanwhile, Sgt. Carey arrived at battalion headquarters. The Sgt. informed Major Green of the impending enemy drive which was being spearheaded with bazookas, machine guns and "burp" guns.

All companies were warned of the grave situation. Lt. Col. James Woodie Lann, Commanding Officer of the 47th Tank Battalion was obliged to dispense with the plans he had made to provide a diversionary attack on one flank of Rittershoffen, while COA attacked Rittershoffen from a different direction.* Tanks were rushed to Hatten, where six more of the 47th Tank Battalion's vehicles were lost in the ensuing battle during

* - S-3 Journal, 47th Tank Battalion

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16 January.*

Sgt. Carey brought a replenishing stock of ammunition back to his platoon and also carried orders for the assault platoon to withdraw. This action was supported by fire from a second platoon of "A" Company which was sent forward to help in their withdrawal.

Meanwhile, the Germans pulled a Tiger tank to the ground north of Hatten, overlooking the town. Another Tiger rolled up the main street. Both tanks commenced to fire into houses occupied by "B" and "C" Companies. This fire was followed by Jerry infantrymen who advanced across the rubble of the buildings firing everything in the book.

Outposts of "C" Company began to withdraw. Pvt. Howard Wierum materially aided the withdrawal by laying a supporting concentration of machine gun fire. With a belt of ammo over his shoulder, Wierum fired his light .30 Ca. machine gun from the hip, through different windows of the room he was occupying. The Pvt said jokingly, "I'm a commando", as he held the enemy at bay, allowing his comrades to withdraw, "mousehole" style. The Tiger tank singled out this machine gun menace and fired a direct round of 88mm HE at Wierum. The Pvt was seriously wounded. "C" Company men carried Wierum to the rear through the windows and blasted holes in the sides of the buildings. "C" Company finally arrived at positions approximately seventy-five yards down the street where "B" Company engaged the enemy at an approximate distance of fifty yards with bazookas, rocket launchers, machine gun fire, small arms and hand grenades. This fire contained the enemy until American artillery and tank fire broke up the attack.

* - As the battle for Hatten progressed during the coming days, so many tanks were lost that the 47th Tank Battalion was forced to assume a defensive attitude with supporting artillery and mortar fire - S-3 Journal, 47th Tank Battalion

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"B" Company later heard enemy activity approximately 100 yards down the street. 81mm mortar rounds were registered on the suspected German positions. Several Krauts were routed and more of the battered buildings in Hatten were set afire. Intermittent enemy artillery continued throughout the day. One of the German rounds scored a direct hit on Capt. Thomas E. Conboy, killing the commander of "B" Company. 1st Lt. Russell T. Blair, took charge of the Company after Capt. Conboy's death.

The following two days were spent beating off enemy patrols attempting to steal into American positions. Artillery from both sides found its mark, adding to the many dead who lay where they had fallen. Cold weather kept the bodies from deteriorating, preventing a stench that only decaying dead men can produce. American sentries, maintaining vigil were sometimes obliged to secure positions very close to their dead comrades for dayson end.*

An aid station was set up in Hatten to supplement the medical supplies previously parachuted to the 315th Infantry aid men. Captain Charles Hawkins, surgeon and medical Tec 3 Robert Munson had been loaded into a tank with medical supplies to set up the aid station in Hatten. This was Captain Hawkins' first ride in a tank. "All the Captain wanted to know about the tank was the location of the escape hatch."

Sgt. Munson and his men constantly checked for casualties by going through the debris of the houses in Hatten. When locating a casualty, Munson had litter bearers carry the man back. These litter bearers did a Herculean job of carrying wounded through the blasted walls and windows

* - Major Forest T. Green, CO, 19th AIB

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of the buildings. After an enemy mortar barrage landed close, an aid man from the 315th Infantry said, "Hold up, I'm going to drop the litter". The other men suggested he use two hands instead of the one he was using to carry the litter. The tired aid man replied, "I can't", and held up the stump of his other arm.*

Temporary treatment was given at the aid station in Hatten. To evacuate the casualties out of the town, half tracks and light tanks were loaded with American wounded. Litter cases were stretched across the backs of the tanks and the half tracks. The vehicles took the wounded men back to Niederbetschdorf via the exit leading from "Y" Street to the southwest.

The 19th AIB aid station in Niederbetschdorf was assisted by "B" Company of the 84th Medical Battalion. Even in this town the wounded were not entirely safe. On one occasion a German jet-propelled plane dropped its bomb load close to the rear aid station.** A few injured showed fright when the windows blew out, but were soon quieted down by the medics. Steel helmets were placed on the patients and the aid men methodically began their work again.

Injured men were evacuated from Hatten during the dark hours of the night. The route used was from "Y" Street south to the railroad tracks and thence west to Niederbetschdorf. As one half-track was taking its precious load of wounded to Niederbetschdorf, the vehicle was struck by a German artillery round. The explosion killed the driver and wounded aid man Tec 5 Edward B. Powell occupying the front seat. The injured men dragged themselves away from the track to the shelter of the ground. After assuring themselves that all was safe, the wounded helped each

* - All aid men of the 19th AIB Medics told of this story but did not know the man's name.

** - Several attacks were made by German ME-262 planes. History 79th Div Artillery, 1 Jan - 31 Jan 1945

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other back onto the vehicle and rode into Niederbetschdorf in the darkness.

Men in the rear echelon took up a collection of the packages they had received from home. These delicacies along with hot coffee and doughnuts were sent to the fighters in Hatten. Rear echelon men of the fighting elements went to church daily to pray for their heroic comrades engaged in the battle.

Freshly killed rabbits and chicken made the fighter's "K" Rations more appetizing. S/Sgt Weldon S. Shickel, (Co "A") had his mortar platoon use bed sheets for table cloths and sat down to a delicious meal while sentries guarded against the ever present Boche. When all his men had eaten, the dishes were cleared away. On the white table cloths were placed neat piles of ammo, clips, loaded magazines, bazooka rounds and hand grenades. The men were all set up for comfortable fighting.

Orders were issued to permit the evacuation of twenty shock cases from each battalion in Hatten.* However, since almost all the men were in a state of shock and nervousness, it was decided not to evacuate anyone in fairness to them all. The decision was approved by the fighting soldiers "who got wind of it through the usual army grapevine".** One man approached 1st Lt. Charles B. Wallace and said in jest, "You've GOT to evacuate me sir, I've contracted a venereal disease."

Lt. Thoron became infuriated at one man wasting ammunition which was

* - Orders issued by Col. D.H. Hudelson, Commanding Officer, CC#1.
** - Lt. Russell T. Blair, CO, CO "B", 19th AIB

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already at a premium. The Private was nonchalantly picking off pigeons with his M-1 while a lull existed in the battle.

T/Sgt John M. Taylor, "B" Company, saw a horse roaming near his position. The Sergeant brought the horse into the barn where he fed the animal and made it comfortable. Lt. Blair asked the Sergeant, "What the hell are you doing with that horse?" Sgt Taylor replied, "Just making him comfortable sir. If the Jerries attack once more, I'm going to get on this nag and pull a "Paul Revere", by racing past the OP calling 'the Jerries are coming'".*

The enemy attempted two infantry attacks on the 18th of January, one at daylight and another at dusk, supported by a flame-throwing tank.** Heavy American artillery concentrations broke them up, inflicting extremely heavy casualties on the Germans north of Hatten.***

Artillery ammunition of all types was getting critically low and every concentration had to be certain before fire was delivered.# Reconnaissance missions of American aircraft confirmed PW stories that there were approximately sixty enemy artillery batteries in front of the Hatten sector.##

At approximately 0730 on the morning of 19 January, the Germans opened up with everything they had in the form of tank, mortar and artillery fire.### Thousands of HE and AP shells from heavy guns as well as mortar rounds burst on the American held portion of Hatten. The German's target amounted to an area 200 yards north and south, and 400 yards east

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- * - Railroad Station (16.0-32.8)
 - ** - History 79th Div Arty, 1 Jan - 31 Jan 1945, S-2 Report, 315th Inf Regt
 - *** - History, 79th Div Artillery, 1 Jan - 31 Jan 1945
 - # - Ibid
 - ## - Ibid
 - ### - 315th Infantry, S-2 Journal, History 79th Div Artillery

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and west. The bombardment last continuously until 0900. "Men who had been at Anzio said they would gladly have welcomed a siege on the beach in lieu of that barrage on Hatten".*

The rubble of Hatten was further scattered as the preponderant hammering and deafening noise continued. The air was raining dangerously with flying shrapnel, timber, stone and debris of all descriptions. Rounds smacked home everywhere, killing and maiming Americans and civilians alike. A direct hit exploded in a house occupied by a platoon of "A" Company men and a group of civilians. The blast killed one soldier and injured five more as well as three civilians. When the noise and concussion had subsided, civilian voices could be heard crying and screaming in terror. The injured soldiers moaned and sobbed quietly. One of the group, a seven year old Alsatian girl made her way to 2d Lt. Joseph Osborne, in command of the group. The little girl looked very clean in spite of her bedraggled clothes. She brushed the pretty dark locks of hair that fell in disorder on her tiny shoulders and asked, "Is that the Boche?". Lt. Osborne understood the German words and answered, "Yes". "Are they coming?", she asked. "No", was Osborne's reply. The girl made her way quietly back to a corner and sat down as if nothing had happened. This action quieted everybody in the cellar and kept them on an even keel.**

Another direct hit struck the first aid station, injuring patients situated on the first floor and cellar of a building on the western side of Hatten. One of the four shells to hit the building burrowed through the cellar before exploding.*** Approximately 20 men in the aid station

* - Pfc James R. Benzinger

** - 2d Lt. Joseph Osborne, "A" Co, 19th AIB

*** - Apparently a delayed action fuze

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were threatened in the fire that started immediately. Fortunately all the men were able to evacuate themselves as the walls began to collapse in the upstairs structure. A new aid station was set up in the cellar of another building to accomodate the forty-two American casualties suffered this day. Aid kits and plasma bottles had been blown up when the aid station was initially hit. Until replenishing supplies were brought up, the aid men worked with handkerchiefs, bed sheets and strips of blankets to supplement the shortage of bandages and aid kits.*

Many other structures were smashed and wounded men were trapped with their dead buddies under heavy timbers caved in by the terrific barrage. These injured could not work free and had to remain with their silent comrades until help came later in the day.

Realizing the Germans would probably attack when the barrage ceased, the GIs prepared to defend their desolate positions.

Immediately after the enemy artillery concentration ceased, a German tank began to move westward on the main street while another Tiger, painted white for camouflage, prepared to flank the American positions from the southeast. The enemy tank on the main street clanked forward over the debris. This menace opened up with machine gun and 88mm fire, aided by the "burp" guns of its supporting infantry. The outpost of the American lines was pushed back until reaching both sides of the street in the vicinity of the "Fort". American tank, artillery, bazooka, machine gun, small arms fire and hand grenades prevented the enemy tanks and infantrymen from advancing through the wreckage of main street. The spirit of the fight was exemplified by Pfc's Clayton Bronson and Rene

* - Capt. Charles Hawkins, Doctor, 19th AIB

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Bessette. These men lay wounded where they had fallen, unable to move under their own power. Lt. Blair told both he would evacuate the men as soon as possible. ^BBersette replied, "Don't bother about us, stop the goddamn Jerries".

S/Sgt Mathias, "B" Company, 47th Tank Battalion brought his tank forward from its mobile reserve position. Mathias' tank roared ahead firing 75mm shells at the advancing enemy. Meanwhile, the German tank to the south of the town worked its way toward the barn located behind the "Fort". The Mark V opened up with a direct burst of 88mm fire into the barn. Unwounded Americans scattered in a mad melee. Lt. Young on his way into the barn stepped aside to avoid being trampled upon. The Lieutenant yelled orders but none of the men heard him. Young finally singled out S/Sgt Gregory Wiercinski and asked him for a bazooka. The Sergeant said he didn't have one. Young replied, "Give me a man and I'll get one". A bazooka was quickly obtained from a "B" Company man in the next house. Before the bazooka could be put into play, the German tank, only 35 yards away, opened up with another round from its cannon. The barn trembled and then began to burn. Infantrymen attempted to flank the tank with bazookas but were singled out and blasted individually by the tank's 88mm and machine gun.* Other men in the vicinity attempted to fire at the armor with bazookas. Unfortunately the orchard surrounding the enemy tank acted as protection and many of the bazooka rounds exploded against the trees separating the tank and the Americans. American artillery fire, falling close to American occupied houses, began finding its mark on the Panzer vehicle. This fire, coupled with bazooka and launcher

* - 1st Lt. Russell T. Blair

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grenade fire of approximately 25 infantrymen from the "Fort" drove off the tank. But there was still a serious threat from the German infantry who were swarming in from the northeast and southeast.* The Germans' attack was let by fanatical paratroopers yelling insults such as "Yankee bastards", while they charged,** supported by tanks firing from the northeast and southeast.*** Some of the German armor was identified as American Sherman tanks. "The 12th Armored Division lost a number of tanks some days ago, and now some of the armor is being used against us".# These paratroopers were of definitely superior quality and the Americans had learned to respect their fighting capabilities while in Hatten. Infantrymen took the invaders on with small arms and hand grenades. American artillery laid a terrific barrage "in close". Slick black uniforms of the young German paratroopers were ripped to shreds as the blast of American artillery smashed their bones and tore off their limbs. This same American artillery concentrated on the roads leading to the north and east from Hatten to prevent enemy reinforcements attempting to aid the Germans. The enemy effort was abated by the devastating barrage.## American positions were once more consolidated. Several Germans gave themselves up soon afterward, complaining, "They could not stand our artillery any longer".###

On January 20th, orders were received to withdraw from Hatten to a new line of defense.#### Two medium tanks and two tank destroyers with a small group of infantrymen were to act as a rear guard for the

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- * - History, 79th Div Artillery, 1 Jan - 31 Jan 1945
 - ** - 1st Lt. Russell T. Blair, "B" Co, 19th AIB
 - *** - 315th Infantry Regiment, S-2 Report
 - # - History, 79th Div Artillery, 1 Jan - 31 Jan 1945
 - ## - History, 79th Div Artillery, 1 Jan - 31 Jan 1945
 - ### - S-3 Journal, 19th AIB
 - #### - Ibid.

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withdrawing units. The 94th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron was to lead "G" Company, 315th Infantry, "A" Company and "C" Company, 19th AIB, "E" and "F" Companies, 315th Infantry, "B" Company, 19th AIB, and elements of the 2d Chemical Battalion and the 813th and 827th Tank Destroyer Battalions out.* It was reported that the enemy may have been withdrawing to the east while the Americans withdrew to the west, but this statement is not a verified fact.**

The welcome end had at last come to the struggle for possession of Hatten's rubble, the struggle which has since been compared with Cassino and Stalingrad.*** Hatten, the once picturesque and congenial Alsatian village was nothing but a smoldering waste. Not a building was left unscarred by the encounter which prevailed when Americans met Germans. The battle for Hatten would long be remembered by all its alumni. Smoke billowed into the air from the still burning timbers of this historic village. Horses, cows and pigs poked about the desolation, bewilderedly looking for food.

As the Americans passed out of the decaying village, they were conscious of their silent buddies left behind, still holding the rubble of Hatten.**** These Americans who had made the supreme sacrifice were not alone. For every fallen American, more than ten Germans lay dead in the cold snow.*****

The men moved quietly along the main supply route, passing numerous American and German tanks, nothing more than rust colored junk now. Down in their hearts, the men were reluctant to leave this village they had fought so gallantly to hold. They felt as if they had lost the war,

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- * - S-2 Report, 315th Infantry Regiment
 - ** - Ibid
 - *** - Ibid
 - **** - 1st Lt. Russell T. Blair; Pfc James R. Benzinger
 - ***** - Maj Forest T. Greene, CO, 19th AIB - History, Hq, CCR, 11th Armd Div, 24 Jan 1945

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had fought and suffered and died in vain.* On the contrary, however, these warriors had gained precious time by their bitter and magnificent stand. Attack after attack by the enemy had been frustrated. The Americans, "with the help of God", ** had managed to hold the best that Hitler had to offer.***

The steady pounding from both sides had brought ruin and devastation to the same friendly village of Hatten through which these Americans had ridden triumphantly and unmolested a month before.**** This fact was particularly distasteful to the GIs since the enemy had used the same ground as a spring board for its attack.# The stress and strain on human endurance in the see-saw, house to house, barn to barn struggle can hardly be portrayed in mere phrases.

The German High Command had paid heavily in its intended smash southward. The enemy drive from the north toward Haguenau and Strassbourg to flood the Alsatian plain had been drastically stalled.## The potent enemy thrust, destined to play such an important part in Germany's plans had been checked. Although the main line of resistance was forced back in depth, the German drive had lost its force and became a limited penetration instead of the much desired break-through over this section of the Alsatian plain.### Enemy strategy was completely mastered and befuddled. American commanders had been given sufficient time to properly contend with the enemy's potentially mighty break-through which in reality became a trickle.

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- * - 1st Lt. Russell T. Blair; Pfc James R. Benzinger
 - ** - 2d Lt. Joseph Osborne, "A" Company, 19th AIB
 - *** - 315th Infantry Regiment, S-2 Report
 - **** - Pfc James R. Benzinger
 - # - 315th Infantry Regiment, S-2 Report
 - ## - G-2, 14th Armored Division, Lt. Col. Harold E. Miller
 - ### - S-2 Report, 315th Infantry Regiment

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The strategic evacuation completely surprised the Germans and they did not attempt to follow.* Enemy interference with the withdrawal was negligible although light harassing fire fell during the period.**

The withdrawal continued over ice and snow until reaching the vicinity of Haguenau, along the Moder River. Elements of the 14th Armored Division and 79th Infantry Division tied in with the new mail line of resistance. This was the line they had been gaining time for other organizations to establish. The heroes of Hatten and Rittershoffen established contact with the 36th Infantry Division and 12th Armored Division in the Haguenau sector.***

Casualties of CCR in Hatten were: Killed in action, 3 Officers and 23 enlisted men; wounded in action, 13 officers and 272 enlisted men; missing in action, 1 officer and 50 enlisted men. Equipment lost: 17 medium tanks, 5 light tanks, 1 half-track, 3, 75mm anti-tank guns, 1, SCR 506, 1, SCR 300. Enemy losses were established at: Killed in action 678; wounded in action, 1000. Enemy equipment lost: 7 Mark IV Tanks; 6 anti-tank guns, 3, S/P guns, 16 machine and 36 bazookas.****

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- * - Division History, 79th Div, period 1 Jan - 31 Jan 45
 - ** - S-2 Report, 315th Infantry Regiment
 - *** - See overlay with S-2 Journal, 14th Armd Div, 79th Inf Div
 - **** - History, Hq, CCR, 14th Armd Div, 24 Jan 1945. Other casualties, see 315th Regt, 14th AIB, 242d Regt "Admission and Disposition" Reports.

1st Lt. Edgar B. Mooney, Jr.
Historical Section
Hq, Seventh Army

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 RITTERSHOFFEN-HATTEN

 E-X-P-E-N-D-I-T-U-R-E-S

	M E N		V E H I C L E S		A M M U N I T I O N	
	OFF	E M			TYPE	ROUNDS
Killed	6	48	Trk, $\frac{1}{4}$ Ton	15	Carbine	64,670
Wounded	29	505	Tk, Lt, M5	12	Cal. .30	682,787
Missing	6	106	Tk, Med, M4	27	Cal. .45	36,460
NBC	7	258	Trk, $2\frac{1}{2}$ Ton	3	Cal. .50	43,337
			Trailer	10	37mm	1,825
			Carriage		57mm	1,800
			Mtr, 105	2	75mm	6,723
			Half-Track	5	76mm	3,392
			Tk Recovery	1	60mm	3,977
			Car, Armd	1	81mm	2,584
			Ambulance	1	Hvy Arty	730
			Gun, 57mm	6	Med Arty	4,776
					Lt Arty	33,747
					Rocket 2.36	1,496
					Grenades	3,542
					Mines	7,500
					Bombs	120

GASOLINE EXPENDED: 193,300 Gallons

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